

*Do you believe in the Loch Ness Monster?*

Children's influence on mothers' beliefs, values, and social/cultural practices.

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## Abstract

Obtaining mothers' perspectives and descriptions of incidents in which their child(ren) said or did something that influenced the mothers' values, beliefs, and/or social or cultural practices, that is, the content of socialization, was the primary aim of this research. Bakhtin's (2004) metatheoretical account of *dialogism* was used to frame this study. From a dialogic perspective utterances (for example, the utterances of children in the present study) are events or acts and are presented as one way to view the process of socialization. In part this purpose, and the decision to utilize a qualitative research orientation, was to address a call (Lollis & Kuczynski, 1997) for qualitative or microanalytic analyses to help elucidate the processes of socialization.

Mothers (N=10) in this study were able to provide descriptions of incidents in which their child(ren) said or did something that influenced the mother and hence we have some description of the concept of bidirectionality, a well accepted, but under-theorized concept in developmental psychology. While the concepts of multiple sources of influence and contexts are salient areas of research in parent-child socialization, and were mentioned in the informants reporting these areas did not appear to be as salient in the mothers' accounts. Emotions and the meaning mothers 'derived' from the interactions did, however, take much more prominence in the described incidents.

## Introduction

### Situating the study

My background is developmental psychology, so when my son was born, many developmental findings and issues became salient in many traditional and unexpected ways for me. I gave the issue of temperament (my own and my son's) more prominence and I read the developmental literature regarding raising a bilingual child. I could no longer devote large and long periods of time to my graduate work and I also found I no longer wanted to. When my son started school, although we no longer spent most of the day together, his happiness and well-being was and still is, gladly, a main focus of my daily life. This focus can take the form of he and I talking, working to support our whole family in being able to participate in particular activities, and watching my son participate in recreational events, or, for example, how to cook. Then my wish for, and eventual return to, graduate work also became a focus of my daily life.

Due to a confluence of circumstances my son has not been raised with either of his parents' families or close friends nearby. We moved to St. Catharines when he was a toddler and we did not know anyone. Although we participated in the community and many programs for mothers and children, there was not another adult who was a constant in his life until he attended preschool and kindergarten.

My son had been attending kindergarten for a short period of time and we were at home and he asked if he could make a picture. I made a suggestion of how to start to get his materials ready and prepare for his starting his picture and he informed me that this was not the way it should be done, that his teacher has the class prepare

in a different way. I distinctly remember stopping in my tracks and being surprised. This was one of the first times that another adult was influencing my son's behaviour and the prominence of my values and practices had taken in his life. This instance is one of the driving forces behind the current research study.

Although my son had attended preschool and was going to kindergarten and he had already brought lots of different ideas, practices, and 'stories' into our life, for me this was the first realization that I was going to have to adjust and think about how I would approach this. How my child decides to undertake an art project may not be high on my priorities but I realized that this may not always be the case. How would he and I negotiate other practices and values that I hold dear and how would, and do I, negotiate my want for him to have other people be important and loving parts of his life when our fundamental values and practices may differ.

If I am honest I was surprised by my own irritation toward this teacher who is a lovely person, who always had my son's best interests at heart and who was an incredibly important part of his daily life. On an affective and emotional level I felt challenged and I was surprised that I felt this. As noted, my son had brought many other influences into the house but, in retrospect, I have wondered that perhaps the difference in this particular incident was that he stated it out loud. If we use Ms. Smith as his teacher's name, my son said something like: 'No, Ms. Smith says we are to do it this way'. Perhaps this was one of the first times I had noticed that my son was letting me know explicitly that he was going to go with someone else's way of doing something rather than my own. In our home, my son could have just started his

art by himself, it was not a requirement that he ask permission but in this instance he 'chose' to *say* something.

I think there are many other possible interpretations and layers to this event but this is as close as I can come to recalling the events that ultimately have informed not only my practice and thinking as a parent but also my thinking and practice towards understanding parent and child development in the context of my academic pursuits. For the current research, this event provides me with insight into some of the issues a parent may raise in response to the research questions during the interview and in my analysis of the data. My personal experience and educational background in developmental psychology provide with a wealth of information to draw from but also raises the issue that I need to be mindful of my own biases and expectations with regard to the present project. I feel I need to be mindful that I do not cast and recast the data in reference to my own experience and understanding. Discussion within the developmental literature on parent-child socialization and bidirectionality focuses on several different issues, including: 1) understanding the active nature of the child in parent-child socialization; 2) understanding the active nature of the child within the context of various interactions and relationships; and 3) to understand the process of this active nature.

I have always been interested in theories of language development and the limits of different approaches. At the end of my undergraduate degree I had been introduced to Brown and Levinson's *Politeness* theory (1987), where the utterances of individuals are 'constructed' in reference to the speaker protecting the social face of him- or her- self or of the person to whom the utterance is directed (the addressee).

In addition, utterances are also constructed in reference to the speaker and addressee wanting to go through the world unthwarted. Exposure to this theory moved my theorizing away from strict behaviourist or cognitive models of language development. On my entry to my current graduate program I was most excited to learn about Bakhtin's metatheoretical framework of *Dialogism*, here not only did I find a frame that addressed some of the critiques of developmental psychology that I was exposed to but here I found some possible answers to questions posed by socialization researchers. Bakhtin's dialogism, for me, provides a wonderful window to understand the process of socialization.

*What the study is.*

The bi-directional influence of parent and child in the socialization process is well accepted in the developmental literature (Grusec & Hastings, 2008; Lollis & Kuczynski, 1997; Maccoby, 2008). Children's influence on a parent's own beliefs, values, or customs, that is, the content and process of socialization, beyond immediate and contingent responses is not well understood, however.

As author of the present study I asked several different mothers (N=10) to reflect on and describe specific incidents in which their own child said something that influenced the parent's own values, standards, or social/cultural customs. Using a qualitative critical incident methodology (e.g., Benner, 2001) allows the parent the opportunity to provide his or her own account of the active nature of the child in the socialization process. Investigating bidirectionality from a qualitative and micro-analytic level has been suggested as one way to understand this phenomenon more fully (Lollis & Kuczynski, 1997).



In the area of education (e.g., Ball & Freedman, 2004) and developmental psychology (Tappan, 2000; Wertsch, 1991) Bakhtin's metatheoretical framework of *dialogism* has been used to inform our understanding of the role of language in teaching and learning and the active transformation of knowledge. In regard to parent-child socialization the use of dialogism frames language not solely as a measure of socialization but rather as constitutive. The event of speaking, the dialogue between parent and child, is the act of socialization, not solely a representation of the event of socialization. Dialogism, therefore, offers another possible avenue from which to understand the process of socialization.

*Why Study is important.*

That parents and children influence each other in their interactions (bidirectionality) in the socialization process has long been acknowledged (Bell, 1968; 1979; Lollis & Kuczynski, 1997) and although this concept:

has achieved the status of a 'given' in developmental perspectives on socialization it is becoming increasingly apparent that, quite apart from the methodological and statistical problems, considerable conceptual barriers remain in applying the ideas in research and practice (p. 446).

In particular, these authors suggest that qualitative and microanalytic studies are helpful in understanding the active role of the child in socialization processes. The proposed research adds to the current developmental literature by asking parents to reflect on and provide their own accounts of how they see their child impacting their own values, standards, and customs and analyzing and reporting these findings

qualitatively. Also, Bakhtin's metatheoretical framework of dialogism is offered as a conceptual and processual perspective to inform research and practice.

Socialization has been theorized from different perspectives: sociocognitive, contextual, and evolutionary models, for example and a main focus in the parent-child socialization literature has been to partial out the relative contributions of different sources of socialization (or influence), for example, parental, sibling, or genetics. In comparison, the how or the processes of socialization are not well understood (Lollis & Kuczynski, 1997; Schermerhorn & Cummings, 2008). A second purpose of the current study is to demonstrate how Bakhtin's metatheoretical framework of *dialogism* speaks to the 'how' of socialization and addresses several key issues raised by contemporary research and theorizing in the developmental literature. For example, how do we account for multiple sources of influences, differing contexts, and bidirectionality in parent-child socialization.

- *Review of the Literature*

There is a vast amount of literature on parent-child socialization and for the purposes of this research I have relied heavily on work of particular researchers and their reflections on their focal research.

*Contemporary Parent-Child Socialization Research and Theory.* I decided to focus on bi-directionality, multiple sources of influence, and contexts of socialization as these are three areas that are currently emphasized in the parent-child socialization literature. Socialization is defined as the *process* by which a child, for example, comes to know the “values, standards, and customs of society as well as [acquire] the ability to function in an adaptive way in the larger social context” (Grusec & Davidov, 2008, p. 284). Maternal behaviour, in particular, has long been seen and used as a measure of child development (Burman, 2008) but the reverse is not the case. Understanding how the child impacts the parent and how this might impact a parent’s approach to the world (that is: to parenting, the parent’s own development, or a particular cultural practice) is not extensively researched. In fact a Q-sort (De Mol & Buysse, 2008) study designed to explicitly address bi-directionality, the influence between parent and child, found: “Adults’ responses emphasize the massiveness of children’s influence on the parents’ personal development” (p. 359). Other research (Harach & Kuczynski, 2005) points to parents’ recognition of how their behaviour strengthens, damages, and repairs their relationship with their children and acknowledges how their own behaviour is influenced by the child’s responses and behaviour (but qualitative descriptions were not highlighted). There seem to be fewer examples of qualitative description of what the influence might be, like Landman’s

(2009) work where mothers reflected on how their children's disabilities are a gift as the child's unconditional love unifies joy, anger, injustice, and hope. We do not have more detailed information to understand how children influence their parents and how their parents perceive this influence. Specifically, from a bi-directional perspective, how might a child influence his or her parent's values, beliefs, or cultural customs and practices? In Harach and Kuczynski's (2005) work the responses of parents were categorized into superordinate categories, for example. Using qualitative approaches may allow us to understand bi-directionality and its processes more fully.

*Bidirectionality.* Theorists and researchers have used the concept of bidirectionality to draw attention to children influencing their parents and not just parents influencing their children; and also, to the idea that socialization encompasses stability and change. Earlier conceptions of socialization focused on unidirectional transmission models of socialization, which assume that the direction of influence is from parent to passive child. Bidirectionality orients us to the possibility of child influences on parents and suggests a more dynamic process of socialization (Lollis & Kuczynski, 1997; Schermerhorn & Cummings, 2008). After all, the practices, values, and knowledges of a particular culture are not transmitted in a facsimile fashion; rather, the child actively transforms those practices, values, and knowledges, as does the parent. Indeed, this is one way in which change can take place across generations. Compliance to or stability of customs and values across generations is one way to understand or measure parent-child socialization (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994; Maccoby, 2008). Historically, effective socialization was seen as a child's demonstration of, or adherence to, a particular value of the parent. A move toward

bidirectionality in parent-child socialization (and by extension to acknowledging the active transformation of knowledge, values, customs, etc., as parent and child interact) directs us to a more complicated idea that socialization is not just about similarity or stability of a particular value or custom across generations but also about difference and change. In other words, socialization can still take place even though a child may not adhere completely to a parent's values or customs. A child may adhere to a particular value but in a different form as the child actively transforms knowledge and he or she brings other information or values from different sources (e.g., friends, the television) to bear on the parental value. Stability and change are both indicators of socialization. Accounts of bidirectionality or child influence on parents, therefore, may include situations in which parents may or may not have changed a particular practice or custom. The processes of socialization or how child and parents influence each other in a bidirectional context are not well theorized, however (Lollis & Kuczynski, 1997; Schermerhorn & Cummings, 2008). Also, we do not have extensive accounts of parents' perception of such influence

*Parents and multiple sources of influences.* Historically, parents were seen as having the predominant influence in child socialization; however, the assumed primacy of the role of parents came into question with research in the areas of behavioural genetics (e.g., Scarr, 1997) and socialization sources outside the family, such as peers (e.g., Harris, 2009). It is well accepted within developmental psychology that there are multiple sources of influence that help shape the values, beliefs, and practices of children and adults and that individuals take an active role in shaping these influences. Understanding how a child or parent might integrate or

simultaneously hold or utilize information, values, practices from multiple sources is difficult when working from a discrete entity model of knowledge transmission, that is, unadulterated knowledge being transmitted from person to person. The social processes that contribute to an active role in real time in the daily activity of relationships are not well theorized, however.

*Contexts.* Also, parent-child socialization has been researched from the perspective of understanding how the context can influence or impact the socialization process. Context can be bedtime routines, going to school, or eating dinner. Goodnow (1997) suggests that part of our understanding needs to include how the specific and the broader social context impacts dyadic behaviours (Goodnow, 1997); that is, we need to see individual and broader contexts to derive a richer understanding of the way parent-child interaction is constrained and enabled by aspects of the day-to-day social world. Contexts do not produce particular behaviour but behaviours, customs, and practices often take place within particular contexts or activities.

In addition, research into the area idea of *intent participation* focuses our attention to those instances, situations, and contexts where children learn and are socialized by observing the behaviours of other members of the community; particularly those times when the behaviour or conversations of adults are specifically intended for children and youth without formally including the children in the activity. For example, in some cultural settings toddlers go with their mothers to work and are allowed and expected as they mature to participate (e.g., make a small fire for

cooking) in activities without ever being formally taught (Rogoff, Paradise, Arauz, Correa-Chavez, & Angelillo, 2003).

For other researchers (e.g., Smetana, 2006) social knowledge is separated into different socio-cognitive *domains* that are organized systems that pertain to particular issues: “Concerns with justice, welfare, and rights -- all moral issues -- coexist with concerns with authority, tradition, and social norms (viewed as social-conventional issues) and concerns with privacy bodily integrity and control, and a delimited set of choices and preferences (described as personal issues) (Smetana, p. 120).

Domain theorists (e.g., Smetana, 2006) acknowledge both the cognitive and social aspects of socialization and point to the world as structured by social expectations and rules. Particular situations or contexts will have regularities that have numerous influences. One of those is that children and adolescents see people in different contexts as having more jurisdiction over some domains than others; for example, parents are not seen as having real jurisdiction over the child’s personal domain, which may involve decisions about dress and appearance.

Researchers note the divisions among domains may not be as rigid as presented in the research context. For example, as Smetana (2006) points out, moral domain research asks that children distinguish between morality and social-conventions, treating issues as if they are mutually exclusive categories and the choice is *either/or* rather than *and/also*. In some instances such lines of questioning make research sense; however, there is a call in many areas of the socialization literature to complicate our presentation of socialization to reflect how socialization takes place in the daily lives of people, particularly parent-child dyads, and not in

such isolationist and reductionistic terms (Goodnow, 1997; Martin, Sugarman, & Thompson, 2003; Schermerhorn & Cummings, 2008; Wertsch, 1991).

The idea of reflecting on and theorizing how socialization takes place in the daily lives of individuals fits with other areas of research where contexts and situational forces, social scripts, and socio-cultural practices have been examined to understand socialization and the transmission of values (Goodnow, 1997; Rogoff, Paradise, Arauz, Correa-Chavez, & Angelillo, 2003; Wellman & Miller, 2008). While domain theorists have been building on structural-developmental theories of moral development by considering “different contexts . . . social roles and social relationships” (Smetana, 2006, p. 120) and how these issues impact children’s decision making (i.e., cognitive processes), other theorists foreground the ways in which attention to daily contexts enhances our understanding of the parent-child dyad (Goodnow, 1997)—for example, what is happening in the community or what happens at bedtime. Like the expectancies that can develop across time within relationships, contexts or repeated participation in particular situations and routines (e.g., bedtime, national holidays) can give us clues on what is expected of our own and a child’s behaviour. For example, in my own family culture after school it was acceptable to say ‘hello’ and acknowledge to a parent I was home and then go and play. If there were visitors to the house, however, it was expected that I would sit and visit (e.g., wait my turn to speak, ask after the visitor’s well-being, or address a recent event in that individual’s life) with family friends for a short period of time before going to play.



These three areas: bi-directionality, multiple sources of influence, and the role of context are several areas of research interest in the parent-child socialization literature. The importance for socialization of each of these areas is acknowledged as part of a developmental process but what this process is or how it takes place in real time and/or moment-to-moment interactions is not well understood (Lollis & Kuczynski, 1997; Maccoby, 2008).

Sociocultural approaches challenge some components of traditional socio-cognitive approaches to socialization particularly that cognitive processes, for example memory (e.g., Boyer & Wertsch, 2009), are discrete phenomena that are possessed by one individual. From a sociocultural, Vygotskian, and Bakhtinian perspective the mind is seen as extending beyond the skin (Wertsch & Tulviste, 2005). A bi-directional perspective of parent-child socialization rests on the assumption that knowledge, values, beliefs, or social practices, do not exist in some true form, separate and distinct from the people who use them but that people transform the knowledge and beliefs, in the socialization process. One 'tool' at humans' disposal to discuss the world between us is language. Language is typically seen as representative of some internal cognitive process but language is also theorized as constitutive. The utterance, the speech act, does not just represent a situation, it is the situation (e.g., Bakhtin, 2004; Emerson & Morson, 1990); it is an active event.

'Language' is often seen as a measure of development; we categorize what people say or rate agreement with statements on questionnaires for example. Also we rate observable behaviour via verbal or written statements and in other instances

language is seen as a representation of parent-child socialization. Some socio-cognitive theorizing rests on the assumption of language as a representation; in comparison Bakhtin's dialogism offers incidents of dialogue as the acts of or events of socialization.

One of the primary goals of the present study is to elucidate the child's role in bidirectional conceptions of parent-child socialization from the mother's perspective and to use Bakhtin's metatheoretical framework to inform our understanding processually and conceptually.

*Bakhtin's Dialogism.*

A dialogic perspective asks us to privilege the spoken utterances of real people in daily life and accept that those spoken utterances have real significance both to those individuals who cast them and to those who actively respond to them. Under dialogism the utterance is: the appropriate unit of analysis, the site of meaning making, how people make their needs, wishes, and desires known and where the transformation of knowledge, beliefs, and social practices take place.

*Utterance as an act.* An utterance is a non-repeatable event in time and space. It is not just that it is extremely difficult to enact the same context, with the same individuals, with the same emotional tone, expressiveness, etc., rather it is that an utterance represents that moment in time and the preceding dialogic history. An utterance is an event. Two utterances may look the same (e.g., same words, same contexts, same interactants etc.) but time has passed and what happens in the time between the use of those 'same' utterances can lead to the 'same' utterance having a slightly or completely different meaning.

The meaning of an utterance is created in the interaction between the participants and has no meaning outside the interaction. As Holquist (2002) notes in his discussion of Bakhtin's theory, "an utterance is not merely *what is said*, it does not passively reflect a situation that lies outside language. Rather the utterance is a deed, it is active, productive" (p. 63). The possibility, therefore, exists that language in developmental theory for example is not a measure of attachment, socialization, or relationship style per se, but rather is the actual manifestation the process by which attachment, socialization, or the forming or maintenance of a relationship are 'made'.

Bakhtin presents us with the idea that meaning does not lie in the dictionary definition of words but rather in *dialogic interaction*. The unit of analysis when investigating language from a Bakhtinian perspective is the utterance<sup>1</sup>. A word or a sentence, in and of itself, cannot convey the meaning of a speaker (Bakhtin, 2004). Bakhtin uses the phrase "what joy" to illustrate this point. Without any other information (e.g., the context, emotional intonation, the addressee, historical time), it is impossible to know whether the phrase "what joy" is an expression of happiness, meant sarcastically, or simply a question. An utterance is not only characterized by a particular emotional expression/intonation, used in a specific context with a particular person with whom the speaker has a particular dialogic history, but is also formed with a particular addressee in mind and is uttered in anticipation of a response.

*Active responsivity.*

The fact is that when the listener perceives and understands the meaning (the language meaning) of speech, he simultaneously takes an active, responsive attitude toward it. He either agrees or disagrees with it (completely or partially), augments it, applies it, prepares for its execution, and so on. And

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<sup>1</sup> An utterance is defined as a spoken unit of language bounded by "a change of speaking subjects" (Bakhtin, 2004, p. 71).

the listener adopts this responsive attitude for the entire duration of the process of listening and understanding, from the very beginning – sometimes literally from the speaker’s first word. Any understanding of live speech, a live utterance, is inherently responsive, although the degree of this activity varies extremely. Any understanding is imbued with response and necessarily elicits it in one form or another: the listener becomes the speaker (Bakhtin, 2004, p. 68)

This idea of responsivity nicely disrupts the idea of a passive listener who is not contributing to the dialogue, that is, a listener who just takes in unadulterated words and sentences. Dialogue is not a one person affair, it necessarily implicates ‘other(s)’. This concept of addressivity is the “quality of turning to someone” (Bakhtin, 2004, p. 99). Active responsivity is another way we can derive meaning from an utterance rather than a sentence: “. . . a sentence in context cannot elicit a response. It Acquires this capability . . . only in the entirety of the whole utterance” (Bakhtin, p. 75).

*Addressivity.* Addressivity “is a constitutive feature of the utterance: without it the utterance does not and cannot exist” (Bakhtin, 2004, p. 99). An utterance is directed to someone and is “shaped by the anticipation of a response by the ‘not yet spoken’ . . . [an utterance is] also shaped by previous utterances about the topic the ‘already spoken’” (Morson & Emerson, p. 137). That the utterance is formed in relation with/to the active responsiveness of the listener implicates the idea that the *someone* is not a generic person, it is not just anyone, it is a particular someone and the meaning of utterances are inherent in the response. Meaning and the transformation of meaning is derived in dialogic interaction, in live utterances cast by particular people and formed for particular individuals, interacting in particular contexts, who live in particular places and cultures at particular times in history. An

utterance is directed to someone and a someone who the speaker has a dialogic history with.

Although both addressivity and active responsiveness are inherent components of an utterance the degree to which either are present varies greatly. Particular spheres of language, that is the speech genres, impact the degree to which ‘convention’ allows for the reworking, reformulating, or the individuality that might be expressed in any given utterance. For example, standardized forms and military commands constrain individuality whereas journal or letter writing afford increased expression of individuality (Bakhtin, 2004).

*Voice.* Voice nicely encapsulates the idea that utterances are spoken, are given voice, and that they are not isolated events, they are events that take place through space and time and that utterances carry the voices of others. For Bakhtin there is no first utterance or first speaker, “any utterance is a link in a very complexly organized chain of other utterances” (p. 69). Utterances do not stand alone independent and distinct from each other as separate and bounded entities. “When we select words in the process of constructing an utterance, we by no means always take them from the system of language in their neutral, *dictionary* form. We usually take them from *other utterances* . . .” (Bakhtin, 2004, p. 87). From a dialogic perspective meaning and words carry the voices of others.

*Speech Genres.* The eventness, addressivity, and the active responsiveness to the utterance all contribute the uniqueness of an utterance and although the exact circumstance of an utterance can never be relived, Bakhtin (2004) notes that “relatively stable types” (p. 61) of utterances or speech genres exist.

If speech genres did not exist and we had not mastered them, if we had to originate them during the speech process and construct each utterance at will for the first time, speech communication would be almost impossible (Bakhtin, 2004, p. 70).

Speech genres are used in and correspond to particular communicative spheres or contexts. They can be types of formal address, greetings, commands, expressions of affection for family members, parental requests, requests within a business setting, etc. -- these are types of primary genres. Secondary speech genres represent texts and “major genres of commentary . . . [that] arise in more complex and comparatively highly developed and organized cultural communication” (Bakhtin, 2004, p. 62). Genres can correspond with particular context of activity, for example, going to bed, preparing for school, or attending a celebration.

*Dialogism Speaks to Contemporary Issues in Parent-Child Socialization Research.*

The parent-child socialization research and theorizing has built a body of work that has demonstrated the importance of a multitude of factors on socialization, in particular that a child is exposed to a variety of values, beliefs, and opinions from multiple sources, parents, peers, teachers, and various media and literacies. We can hear, and at times identify, the voices or ideas of others in what children and parents say.

That utterances carry the voices of others is one way in which multiple sources of influence can be framed from a dialogic perspective. In this circumstance a particular value or belief is not as an isolated cognition that is transmitted from one individual to another; but rather, is put forth in an utterance and the value or belief has a dialogic history in the utterances that have preceded it. The value or belief does not exist independently of utterances.

In any dialogic interaction the 'other' is presupposed to take an active responsive understanding and the utterance is 'formed' in anticipation of a response and these ideas point us to mutual influence and bidirectionality. The very formation of an utterance is influenced by the other via addressivity, the utterance is cast with a particular other in mind, for example, a parent who wishes to teach a child a particular cultural practice, does so with that child in mind. In addition, speech genres provide another way to understand and highlight the importance and the contribution of contexts and cultural practices in respect to socialization. Speech genres – as relatively stable forms of language can afford or constrain the range of behaviour a child or a parent can exhibit in particular circumstances. As speech genres are typical forms tied to particular contexts and practices the idea that the types of experiences a child has or is exposed to impacts not only his or her knowledge of the world but also impacts that ways in which a child expresses him- or her-self in the world.

The utterances of children and young people have been utilized in research from a Bakhtinian framework (e.g., Wertsch, 1991). McCarthy (2004) used Bakhtin's dialogism to understand a child's language development across a three year period and how "a child's use of speech genres provides examples of the ways in which context played a role in shaping a child's language development" (p. 27). In particular, for this child within his play and story telling the researcher/mother could identify the media from which some of the ideas/language came from, that is, from books or television programs and that across time the child "learned to use particular genres in relation to particular audiences for specific purposes" (p. 28). Knoeller

(2004) utilized a dialogic framework to understand how students' rethink information. Narratives of rethinking were identified in students' utterances (discussions) and written responses of an assigned reading.

Parents in prior research studies (De Mol & Buysse, 2008) expressed the massiveness of their child's influence on them and this suggests to me a strong emotional and affective component to some socialization events this relates to my main research focus, which was to get Mothers' perspectives on how their children influence their (the Mum's) values, beliefs, and/or social or cultural practices and customs. By asking Mum to describe an incident when her child influenced her we will have mothers' accounts of child influence and directly speaking to bi-directionality in parent-child socialization. By asking Mothers if they recognize where their child(ren) may have gotten an idea from focuses our attention to multiple sources of influence; similarly with asking questions regarding contexts. Asking about the emotions Mothers felt in reference to an incident of child influence is a further consideration in part because I was surprised by the degree of my own emotional reaction in a similar situation and wanted to explore this.

I also wanted to frame the study from the perspective that: a) the language we use, our utterances, are the sources of socialization; b) Bakhtin's *dialogism* contributes to our theorizing in this regard and c) so does analysing the data from the mothers' perspective, that is inductively. The deductive portion of this research, then used concepts from dialogism to inform parent-child socialization research. This deductive analysis framed by dialogism, also provides a comparative perspective.



### Research Orientation and Design

*Sample.* The informants/participants for this study were mothers (N=10) who had a child between the ages of 5 and 12 years (please see Table 1). Included in Table 1 is the age of mothers and children at time of interview, the age(s) of the child at the time of the incident and ages and gender of the focal child and other children in the family. The mothers were aged from 31- 46 years with a mean age of 39 years.

Of the ten mothers, eight were married or living common-law, one mother is widowed, and one mother is single. One child in the group is home schooled, this child's mother and one other mother do not work at paid employment outside of the home, one other mother works part-time out of the home, and the seven remaining mothers work full-time outside of the home. There are three single children in the sample, five mothers have two children, and two mothers have three or more children.

Each mother in the study was provided the opportunity to describe two incidents of influence; the mothers of the single children provided both examples for their child. On occasion several different incidents would be discussed to highlight a particular areas of influence. Out of the five, two-children families, mothers provided an example for each child in four cases, and in the three or more children families, one mother provided examples for just one child, and the remaining mother described incidents for two different children.

### *Procedure*

*Research Ethics Board.* Brock University Research Ethics Board requested changes to my original proposal; namely, limiting the interview duration, securing

Table 1. The Interviews: The Mothers and their children.

Mother	Mothers Age At Interview	Current Age of Child	Age of Child at time of Incident(s)	Gender of child	# of Turns
Jill <sup>2</sup>	42	12 5	6 to 9 5	Girl Girl	69
Abby	36	8 5	8 5	Girl Boy	27
Paula	41	12 9.5	2.5 & 7 5.5	Boy Girl	43
Carol	35	8.5	8.5 3	Boy	39
Nora	31	6.5	6.5 6.5	Boy	25
Tanya	37	11	11 3.5	Girl	30
Mandy	40	9 7	4 7	Girl Girl	30
Eve	41	12 10	9 2.5	Boy Girl	30
Yvonne	43	11 8 3	11 11	Boy Girl Girl	46
Rachel	46	13 11 9 7	13 6	Girl Girl Boy Girl	47

<sup>2</sup> Mothers' names have been changed.

confidentiality at public recruitment, providing a list of counselling services, asking participants to retain a copy of the letter of invitation, and to address the destruction of data. I addressed each of these requests for clarification and revision and received Research Ethics Board clearance (Appendix A). I was also asked to re-consider some wording in my letter of invitation and asking mothers an age range instead of birth date. Following my proposal defence I began informant/participant recruitment.

One suggested change suggested during my the proposal defence stage of this research was to increase the number of participants from 6 to 10 and this request was achieved.

*Informant recruitment.* Flyers (see Appendix B) were posted at Brock University for recruitment. I also used a *snowballing* technique as a method of recruitment. A mother who expressed interest in this study spoke to other women and with their agreement passed on their contact information to me, this was the primary method of informant recruitment. When I contacted mothers I used the Initial Contact Protocol (see Appendix C) that included a description of the study and questions to identify the age of the child(ren). If the child fit the study criteria, a meeting was arranged at this time. When possible the letter of invitation (Appendix D); the Consent forms (Appendix E); and Parent Resource Information (Appendix F) were provided (e.g., hand delivered or by mail) to the mother before our meeting. At the time of interview we reviewed the Letter of Introduction and the consent forms, which were signed before the interview commenced.

I conducted and transcribed each interview. The interviews (Interview Protocol: Appendix G) with Mums lasted from 45 to 90 minutes: the majority of the interviews were completed within an hour. Interviews took place at dining room tables, in parking lots (while children participated in recreational events), at cafeterias and coffee shops, during lunch hours at offices, in back gardens and in one instance in a front room with the child present<sup>3</sup>. I would ask the broad general question of influence and often the mothers would cover the information for the prompt question in their initial descriptions of the incident of child influence. Typically, I would ask the mum if she would like to add anything; for example: *'you mentioned that you came across a wedding on the beach when your daughter asked you a question, is there anything else you would like me to know about the context so you feel I have a full picture of this incident?'*

Within a week of meeting the mother I transcribed the interview. The initial transcription took between 2 and 4 hours to complete. The interview was transcribed by turns with a turn being each time a different individual spoke. I would then review the transcript while re-listening to the tape recording and adjust any content differences.

*Research Journal.* I kept a research journal where I would jot down thoughts related to my research. For example, at times when conducting the inductive analyses I would have thought about the deductive portion, when this happened I would write these down. I also worked through different coding decisions in this journal or how I group different ideas. Interspersed in the remainder of this document there are grey

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<sup>3</sup> Mum provided consent for the child to be present and tape recorded. We agreed I would conduct the interview as I typically would and the child would join in the conversation if s/he wanted to.

boxes which contained ideas from my research journal that for me are pertinent to my process.

### *Critical Incidents*

I used a critical incident approach to frame the methodology for this study. In nursing practice critical incidents can be: 1) some direct or indirect intervention which made a difference in patient outcome; 2) something went well; 3) there was a breakdown or something did not go; 4) all was typical or ordinary; 5) what took place is quintessential to how we conceive of nursing or 6) what took place was particularly demanding (Gordon & Benner, 1980 as cited in Benner, 2001). When I asked a mother to recall an incident when her child influenced her values, beliefs, etc., the incident can be part of a daily routine or a quintessential parenting moment – it is a critical incident to the mother. Critical incidents, therefore, can take place in an infinite number of circumstances and do not constrain the pool of experiences that a parent can draw from.

I would sit down to start the analyses and be overwhelmed by the fact that there was no way that I would ever finish: the depth and breadth of these data were too much. I have felt this before during prior research projects, but this time I felt like I couldn't do these data justice and that's when the sense of betrayal (Heath, Street, & Mills, 2008) crept in. I now find it hard to recapture that emotion which I found paralyzing. I vacillated between who did I think I was to interpret other people's thoughts, feelings, emotions etc., and annoyance that I couldn't find a manual on how to do this. Last time I wrote up 'my' portion of research, the data analysis was fast – I had set up the data, I knew the analyses to be run. There was definitely a part of me that felt removed from the data (which is not true) but I ran the statistics through SPSS and the findings 'appeared'.

The coding process I had been taught was extensive and comprehensive. I had been asked to remain close to the data and not to rush to deliberate interpretation.

In retrospect, I now realize-I was coding the data in preparation for analyses and this most likely contributed to my sense of separation from the data.

### *Data Analyses*

I used a constant-cross case comparison method as the primary structure of my data analyses. I had conducted the interviews and transcribed these data. I read and re-read the transcript until I felt I had sense of the incident the mother was describing, that is, reading for the whole. I then returned to the transcript and looked for the ‘utterance’ the mother identified as the something the child said that influenced her values, beliefs, or social practices or customs. I worked forward and backward from this utterance to see how other utterances/words related to this. For example, a child challenged the issue of Mum’s statement that she did not believe in the use of water bottles. I would then read, reread, circle and write notes to identify what was linked to this idea. For example, Mum talked about how she was *continually surprised* by the fact that she feels she is losing the battle in influencing her child with her social justice concerns. Also, as I read through the transcript I identified: key words, idiomatic phrases or expressions, repetitions, and revelatory phrases. There were not always clear delineations between these and I did not code these as mutually exclusive categories.

Key words were a word or phrase that stood out as important. Idiomatic phrases were those phrases that seemed to be unique to that mum’s conversational style. Where the incident provided mum with new or different types of knowledge the phrase was coded as a revelatory phrase. I then would enter these key words,

revelatory phrases etc., into individual templates. This template containing the aggregate of these data can be seen in Appendix H.

**Challenges.** I found the initial coding process to be difficult. I was happy to have these data and it was exciting to settle down to the analyses but often I had interference from my prior training, for example, I am used to coding data using the criteria of mutually exclusive categories and I would struggle where to put the phrase or the words.

I had taken workshops in NVIVO coding and as I worked through the data I came to see how the power of this tool when an utterance, for example, can enter into the analyses in several different ways and places.

As I coded inductively I often had breakthrough thoughts on how I could relate this utterance to Bakhtin or how the utterance or idea related to main ideas in developmental psychology. When this happened I would jot down the thought and move on.

I used these analyses (reading for the whole, identifying key words, repetitions etc) to identify similarities and differences between the content of each question. Throughout this process I often would return to a transcript or a portion of a transcript to link ideas together more fully or to make distinctions between ideas. For example, *racism* was a central theme in the transcripts of two different participants when I looked at my codes for key words, revelatory phrases, etc., however, there was not substantial overlap. For example, the key words for the two participants whose responses centred around racism the key words differed: for one participant they were *always remembered that* and *made me rethink* in comparison to *shock, confusion*. In this example, one Mum clearly was addressing racism against her child and in the second case Mum was clearly working against a background of racist socialization that she did not want to transmit to her children. The flavour of the two felt as if they differed substantially.

Complete maximum reification would inevitably lead to the disappearance of the infinitude and bottomlessness of meaning [any meaning] (Bakhtin, 2004, p. 162).

I returned to the inductive analyses repeatedly and began to group similar themes together while keeping differences salient. At this point I recorded any names or labels of themes. I compared each case against the other looking for similarities and differences; for example, I would reflect on what was there in the transcript that would prevent me from grouping this idea with examples from other transcripts.

I then returned to the transcripts identifying those utterances that repeatedly come to mind in reference to my main research question (i.e., developmental literature on parent-child socialization) and then in response to Bakhtin's dialogism. After I outlined the descriptions given by Mums of how their children influenced them. I looked at the follow-up prompts using the same constant cross comparison method, sometimes Mum had covered the content of the prompt questions (i.e., where idea had come from, what was the context, emotions and feelings Mum had in response to the child's utterance). I looked at the key words, repetitions, revelatory phrases etc., associated with each of the questions.



## Incidents of Influence

### *The Utterances.*

My main research focus was to ask Mothers to recall and describe an incident when one of their children said or did something that influenced the Mum's own values, beliefs, and/or social or cultural practices and customs (the content of socialization). The goal to have mothers describe their experience of influence is linked to the more general call for qualitative and micro-analytic studies to help elucidate the concept of bi-directionality in socialization and the active nature of the child in this influence.

In this current chapter I initially present incidents of child influence as described by mothers. These incidents have been grouped into several main themes derived from my analyses. I then briefly discuss how these data speak to bi-directionality – specifically child's influence on mother. I then look at how *dialogism* adds to our understanding of the concept of bi-directionality.

In all but two interviews Mums described an incident when their child said or did something that influenced a value, belief, or social or cultural practices. In two cases an utterance from someone else prompted the Mum to reflect on her values in reference to her child. For example, when one mum heard that children hear about sex at school earlier than she had expected she made a point to ask her son if he had any questions regarding sex.

The child's utterance or the utterance from someone else is bolded and separated from the description under the theme headings. These themes derived from the inductive analysis are presented below along with examples from the incidents

described by the mothers. At the end of each section I revisit the major idea from developmental psychology (i.e., bidirectionality, multiple sources of influence, and context) and how the themes and examples speak to these major ideas individually. Following this I briefly discuss how dialogism informs our understanding of these ideas. Initially, I will look at bidirectionality, then multiple sources of influence, contexts, and emotions.

### Themes

*Why I believe what I believe but in reference to you:*

One way that children influenced their mothers is via the mother examining or re-examining some of her assumptions regarding values and beliefs not for her own sake, or for an individual understanding, but rather in relation to her child: why she holds a particular belief or does what she does in relation to another person – as one Mum explained:

Jill

*So it hasn't changed my belief system, but it's . . . changed how I see belief systems . . . So her . . . questions . . . have made me think a lot about why people have religion, what its used for and um that it is not necessarily an uniformed position . . . so the reassurance that she saw her friends getting from this idea that there was somebody out there that was looking out for them . . . wasn't in her life, made me realize, OK you know some people need a belief system that is grounding for them in the same way as intellectual pursuits are a grounding for our family.*

*God, the Loch Ness Monster, and Superheroes.*

In the following set of examples the issue of belief is directly addressed by the children's utterances in different ways – what is possible, what might be possible,

and how beliefs are categorized. Mums also address their thoughts regarding belief in general.

***Nana, do you believe in god?***

Abby

*... as parents they pick up on, they feed off of how we react to situations, they take on the sensibilities that we have, oh I'll give you another example, it didn't happen to us, but it happened with my son who is 5 and he was with this grandmother, my mother-in-law, and um he said: 'Nana, do you believe in god'. . . my husband and I . . . we're very non-practicing people, so our easy answer would be no, so, but this caught my mother-in-law off guard and she thought, 'oh dear what do I say to him, because I'm not the parent and so she just answered honestly and she replied: 'no (son's name), I do not, do you?' and he replied 'yes I do' and that was the end of the discussion and about 2 seconds later he asked 'Nana, do you believe in the Loch Ness Monster?' and she said 'no, I don't do you?' and he said 'yes'. So we're letting our children decide for themselves but yet being very honest with how we feel and not diminishing how they feel and so . . .*

***'J'suis se grand je une superheroine, J'm ca'.***

Jill

*In school . . . they were talking about what they were going to be when they grew up, you know that kind of thing, going through all of the professions and stuff like that . . . and I guess in the class there was a whole bunch of people that their parents were teachers, so they drew teachers or what their parents did, so they drew that, (my child) is going to be a Superhero when she grows up (mum laughs and shows me the picture) . . . J'suis se grand je une superheroine, J'm ca. So again, I always wonder where is this coming from . . . it just seems to, I don't know, come from nowhere sometimes, because we're not a superhero kind of family.*

***'... and yet they exist'***

Tanya

*So I was never a pink person and that was her favourite color for like 8 full years, everything was pink, everything was princess, and I don't and I think a lot has to do with media influence and peer influence and other family*

*member influence but that for me, it still shocked me, because I thought I would have over riding control and I just didn't. So, I guess it was a total lack of control . . . the cleverest thing that I heard her say recently, which kind of made me rethink it, was we were out at a mall or something and she wanted some water and she said can I just go buy a bottle of water and I said 'well (child's name) you know I don't believe bottled water' and she said 'and yet they exist' (laughs) and I thought OK, yeah, alright, fair enough, good point, so then I had to examine my own fundamental beliefs in its use, just because I don't believe in something it doesn't mean everybody else believes in it and so she did get her bottle of water because she was thirsty and we recycled it, but I still felt really bad.*

***'so . . . how come you don't believe in god?'***

**Jill**

*Something will happen in school, I won't find out until she's digested it a bit and sometimes we'll be sitting at the table doing something, you know, doing a craft project or something like that and these things will just kind of just pop out: 'so how come you don't believe in god? Sort of thing. . . . In her class . . . she finds it a little bit stressful when they start talking about what god wants from us and what we have to do in order to go to heaven and that sort of thing and I would say that our cultural practices are pretty much atheist. We don't believe in god, we've not taught our children to believe in god. Um, and we've presented her . . . with a whole bunch of alternatives in terms of different mythologies and scientific explanations . . . so she'll come home with questions based on what happens at school and asking about things, you know 'well if people are bad does that mean they are going to hell' sort of stuff like that. . . . it is kind of interesting because we don't, its not, it wasn't a big part of our lives at all, it was like, we don't believe that's all there is to it, but when you start getting questioned about it, especially from somebody who is stressed about going to hell you . . . start thinking so where does that, where does my belief come, my lack of belief come from, what do I base that on, why is that reassuring to me, not to believe, whereas its, it would be more reassuring to her to actually believe.*

In reference to other utterances and the general realm of children influence in the domain of *belief*, Mums offer the following:

**Abby**

*. . . the do you believe question comes up so much, with the Easter Bunny, with Santa Claus, with everything, with anything magical and as a parent I don't want to take away any of that magic of childhood . . . I think they get a lot from the media, um but also to what we allow them, you know, that we*

*create opportunities for things to feel magical. The whole Santa and even the Easter Bunny, let them believe, let them have that, . . . but then, you know, trying to hide all our tracks, how do I lie around this, so I suppose that's a bit of challenge as to, you know, your moral beliefs -- should you be lying to your kid.*

In reference to two children in the same family:

Jill

*. . . I don't think she's stressed about the same things and she also kind of lives in her own little make believe world, so – maybe God is there, I don't know, there's all kinds of princesses, witches, and fairies here, and so maybe god could be too.*

In this next set of quotes we see that sometimes there are unintended consequences for parental choices or again a daily behaviour or practice that is contradiction to the values parents have tried to instill.

#### *Examining a parenting practice – what we say and do*

As parents it is not unusual to plug in a Disney movie or to watch American Idol with children and sometimes what the child sees is in contradiction to parents' values.

#### ***'I'm not watching this movie'***

Paula

*"he gets up and looks at me and says 'I'm not watching this movie' and I said 'why?' and he says well 'they're being mean to that man, they're making fun of him and they're not being nice to him' and it made me understand that um, the lesson of the movie is lost on him because he can't get past that treatment of someone, and it made me see all kinds of things differently because when we saw them as kids (Disney movies) we just accepted them, the way they were, well I did anyway and then I realized that there are certain things that I didn't want him to see because they would influence him and I didn't realize*

*that they would. Even, he was older, he was 7, and um we were watching the auditions for American Idol, and I never thought anything of it, until we got about 3 auditions in and he asked me why everybody was laughing at these people, and I thought my god, I'm making him watch a show where they're laughing at people . . . what am I doing, I'm sitting here with him, watching a show that basically the point at this time is mocking people, so we turned it off. But that is something I would never as an adult realized what I was watching, because I'm seeing it through his eyes, instead of my eyes, which is still a mocking show, and is somehow acceptable to us, but I see that much more readily now, because of them.*

***'You should buy it for me and make me happy'***

Nora

*. . . when I was younger, I used to have a lot of emphasis on being bought things and I still have that mentality a little today in terms of, if you love me you will buy me something (laughs) kind of thing, right . . . now I see those, like signs in my son but he'll say like, you know we're at a mall, and I'm like I can't get you that we don't have money, he's like but you love me and I was like yes and he's like so 'you should buy it for me and make me happy' and I feel like he's learned that from me a little because I would say joking things like that to his father, not really thinking he would pick that up . . . and I try to tell him now, like we can do simple things like color together and spend time together and that is still showing that I love you . . . so that's something I think I've really changed in terms of what I value.*

***'She'll call me fat, they call each other fat, everybody's fat in our family'.***

Rachel

*I have 3 girls now and the oldest one is going through maturity and she is very critical of my body shape and considering I've had 4 kids and I'm 46 . . . her expectations are very unrealistic . . . I'm strong, . . . I work out hard . . . I try to stay fit . . . she'll call me fat and I know she's preoccupied with her self, she doesn't want to be fat . . . the other kids talk about it too, they call each other, or say I'm fat, everybody's fat in our family and I wonder what I did to start that, because oh yeah, I don't want to be over weight, I want to stay in shape, I thought I was quiet about it . . . so they are changing my values, they are making me very secretive about my preoccupation and I also kind of think it's really irrelevant now, I just want them to think – look I'm healthy and I've had 4 kids and I wanna, you know, stay in shape . . . I feel guilty that I might of*

*created this, earlier on when maybe they were just little toddlers and I was trying to lose baby weight and maybe asking my husband – will I ever get in shape again or am I ever going to look good again, maybe it was some stupid comment.*

***‘I thought you said scooters were dangerous’***

Yvonne

*We just got our second child a scooter for her birthday and when my eldest son was younger, he wanted a scooter, and I said no, they’re not safe. I read somewhere a lot of kids get injured on scooters, so at the time I said, no we’re not going to do scooters . . . so recently when we bought one for his sister, he said to me ‘I thought you said scooters were dangerous’, and I said, well I did, I said for you, and as I was saying it, I thought that doesn’t make any sense. . . I need to explain it further to him . . . you know you’re the type of child, that goes all out and you’d probably try to go really fast and you know where as your sister doesn’t have that personality, she doesn’t have that tendency . . . so that kind of made me think about, you know, things are not always black and white and I probably shouldn’t have said no scooters, and you know, I don’t think I said no scooters for anybody.*

*Intentional parenting practices*

Another theme that emerged was the Mums recognizing that some of their intended and intentional practices were now being reflected back and this fact, at times, came as a surprise.

***‘Everything is going to be alright -- just like that song’***

Paula

*For me my children influence me significantly in many different areas, but the area that is probably the most significant because it’s the most emotional area is how they’ve influenced my um, what’s the word, how they’ve influenced how we deal with the death of their father, my husband. Um, children view death, well I think, well from what I have learnt, is that children view death the way you present it to them, so they reflect back how we see things and I tried to keep everything as calm as possible for them and in doing so, they*

*reflect that back to me when I'm not able to be that way . . . but one time she said (daughter) to me, probably a week after the funeral, um the service that we had was done with a celebrant and music for the service was not um religious it was all just kind of modern music . . . and one of the songs that I chose for the ceremony was for the end of the funeral as the casket was leaving the chapel, that's the song that was playing . . . and reason I chose that song was, was for the children, because the chorus is 'everything is going to be alright' and I was upset one day and I was crying and my daughter came up to me and she hugged and she said 'you know mummy don't worry' she says 'everything is going to be alright just like that song'. So you know I chose it for them hoping that that would influence them and it did, but in turn was reflected back to me again, without realizing that that was going to happen . . . um, I guess because we want to influence our children and sometimes we influence them without realizing it works.*

***'Are Jewish Weddings more fun than Christian Weddings?'***

Abby

*. . . I can think of any specific thing when what they have said has challenged my beliefs. My husband is Jewish but very non-practicing, more on the cultural side of it and with me with my Christian upbringing, I suppose again, very non-practicing, um, because we have a mixed household, that definitely gets discussed a lot, um, so I can't say that there have been any times where they have challenged us but certainly the questions that they ask force us to think about the kind of answer we give them, in order to let them decide for themselves and yet, hopefully set them on a path where they think critically about everything that they see in life. . . this past weekend we saw a wedding, we were at a beach . . . and it was a Jewish wedding and my daughter and I were watching the celebration, they were dancing, and they were dancing the horah . . . and it was, you know, a lovely summer night and there was lots of music and dancing and my daughter said: "are Jewish weddings more fun than Christian weddings?"*

***'Now mum, you're feeling sorry for yourself and that's not appropriate, you need to come up and talk to everybody'***

Yvonne

*. . . this is a bit embarrassing but that's OK. So recently on my birthday my husband had a migraine so he was in bed all day . . . We had planned that*



*when I got home, he was going to make a cake with the kids and have a cake and a BBQ. So, I got home from work and he was in bed with a migraine, so I felt sorry for myself (laughs) and I said well maybe I will go out and buy myself a cake, and my husband was, 'oh no no, we'll make you one' and then so it went 'no no no', 'yes yes yes' . . . so then I said, no we'll do something tomorrow, never mind we won't do anything today and so then I went downstairs and my son came down and he said 'now mum, you're feeling sorry for yourself and that's not appropriate, you need to come up and talk to everybody'. And that was like, he has never done that before . . . just the fact that he said that, I thought, wow, because it's one thing for your husband or partner to point that out, but when your child points it out. . . we're trying to teach him – when you're upset, then you need to come and say I'm upset because of X, Y, Z, and not just sit there and sulk, so I guess it worked. . . but what you were saying before about um something about influence, something has influenced you the way we think, I didn't think that, I always thought I don't know how much is getting through to him, so for him to come up with that, it was sort of reassuring that, 'oh, oh, OK so yeah, he is absorbing some of these social or what am I trying to say, social norms or whatever, you know.*

*' . . . and yet they exist'*

Tanya

*I said . . . you know I don't believe in bottled water' and she said 'and yet they exist' (laughs) and I thought OK, yeah, alright, fair enough, good point . . . I had an inherent belief that you could sculpt your children . . . and that the things I, you know, if I modeled my beliefs, and we lived in a certain lifestyle that that would just naturally be instilled in her and I was very shocked to find that that wasn't the case repeatedly . . . so, I soon realized that children have their own minds which was shocking to me, I really thought that we could sculpt their minds and model them into whatever we want and I know that this is like a long debate and all that stuff that I learnt in education didn't prepare me for parenthood, because I thought that was sort of different, school learning versus, I always thought that the parental influence was much bigger than it actually is. . . So a lot of my environmental social justice concerns don't seem to carry forward, it is a very concerted effort . . . but it really surprises me how much I lose in that battle over and over again. So I wonder what effect it will have in the future, but right now, that's the biggest thing.*

*Intergenerational transmission – not: Making a change in parenting.*

For one mum the utterance she heard that kids tend to learn about sex from their peers moved her to talk about sex with her son, a discussion that did not take place in her childhood. Her decision to do so was not planned per se, that is, to interrupt intergenerational socialization but was a positive outcome of hearing this statistic and talking to her child.

***‘Statistically children hear about sex from their friends at school by grade 4’***

Eve

*Well he was in Grade 4, 9 years-old and I heard that statistically children hear about sex from their friends at school by grade 4, by grade 4, and it scared me, because we never openly talked about it at home, growing up, and I thought, you know what, I want him to get the accurate information, so I started asking him questions, like getting myself out of the comfort zone, and asking him questions and I made it as non-threatening as possible . . . I realized that I was, I changed the way, I grew up with the silence about sex and made it more overt so that if anything, if any problems arise in the future that they’ll feel they can come home and talk about it, to help them make the right choices.*

After her 2.5 year old son bit her 5 month old daughter, Mum remembers:

Eve

*And that was the first time that I was so angry with him . . . that I would be so torn between being so angry with him, but still loving him, and I took him and I put him in his bed and I remember thinking that, like growing up, if we did anything that bothered my Mom, she would just give us the silent treatment for ever, right, and I remember feeling like I am so angry with him, like I would have had a spank on our bottom, like we would have had a good whack, from home, you know. It would have been smack and in bed . . . and I remember my instinct was I wanted to slap his bum, because that’s the home I grew up in, but I didn’t want to do it and I knew the safest bet would be to take him and*

*put him in his crib and to leave him there until I cooled down and I had to figure out, how do I deal with this. . . . so it scared me that I could be so angry with my child and I was afraid that I would resort to smacking or you know and I didn't want to and so, I think that was a pivotal moment in how I learned to deal with my anger towards my kids.*

In the following example Mum talks about interrupting her own socialization .

***'The Sarah that went to China.'***

Mandy

*I grew up in small town Ontario -- being black was a defining characteristic, we don't always realize our socialization but we try very hard not to say those things -- not to be racist . . . Since having my children I have definitely become more open minded and tried to accept new things and try new things for their sake and I'm influenced greatly by them and their openness. . . . But I never questioned who I was until I had children . . . like I don't want to be like that, I'm not like that, like these things they come out, they're ingrained right and so I've made that effort to ingrain in them different things, or nothing, like let them make their own decisions. . . one time in kindergarten my daughter was describing an event with two of her friends in her class, . . . actually no, about one friend in her class and the friend's name was Sarah but there was another Sarah in the class and so I said, you know, which Sarah, and she said the Sarah that went to China, 'cause this little girl had gone to China . . . and had come back, but what I thought was really significant was that Sarah was Chinese but it wasn't, she wasn't described by her outward appearance, she was described by an event that occurred and to me it was just, it was very influential in that, how children see everyone one on the same basis and their . . . I guess their opinions are formed by events that happened, so my daughter chose to describe this Sarah as the one that went to China because that event determined who this Sarah was to her . . .*

*What other people see, say, & do.*

This critical incident took place when Mum and son were at the playground and Mum talks about her surprise, shock, and hurt to hear her son ask this question.

**'I'm not brown, right mummy?'**

Nora

*... my son was playing basketball with some friends where we live and he came up to me and told me that one of this friends said that they couldn't play with him because he was too brown and he's like 'I'm not brown right Mummy' ... The other parents didn't seem as shocked by it as me. ... I don't think he's not brown it was the fact that it was brought up as an issue ... every once in a while now he'll ask me if he's going to turn dark like Daddy because he doesn't want to turn dark like Daddy and he never really says why ... I never really realized like that it was an issue, I guess I never ... you know, that it was something that would impact him in this day and time. I never thought it would ever be brought up, and it hurts me sometimes to have him think like that, because I don't wanna, I don't want him to think that there is something wrong with him.*

**'Your child's a menace. Keep him off my property'.**

Rachel

*About 3 years ago he was playing road hockey with the neighbour kids, boys, and a bunch of 3 girls came and watched, they were friends with the other boys, because they go the same school ... (my son) is a bit of an outsider because he goes to a different school and they were making fun of him, one girl in particular ... she called him dwarf and that is also a sensitive issue because we were worried he had a form of dwarfism ... that one kind of hurt me because they might be right ... I had to take a kid to a sporting event and when I came home one of the neighbour boys comes up and goes (son's name) hurt this one girl and she had to go to the hospital, he hurt her eye and what had happened was he had taken a slap shot, she had stood behind him, and he whacked her in the eye. So, we were so concerned, the kid was in the hospital getting stitches and well we didn't know what the status of her eye injury was and I just felt horrible about the whole thing, ashamed, worried, all the negative human emotions ... and I called the parents, left a message, we were so concerned ... they didn't call back to tell us how the kid was so we walked over, and he was so angry and he said your child is a menace, you just keep him off my property and it was like OH MY GOD, what kind of neighbourhood is this, it was an accident ... I know there was some issue of him being angry for being taunted as well ... the other boys said, look it really was an accident and then the man said well, I saw your son chasing the other kid with a hockey stick earlier. I don't know, maybe he did, maybe he*

*was frustrated by something else, so I guess the point of that whole thing was, it was horrible and um I wanted to move . . . get out of this neighbourhood, where they can't kind of work together, you know how they say, it takes a community to raise a child.*

***'How come they can do that and artists can't'***

Carol

*Mmhm, for myself I would say, especially when it comes to visual arts, I was very blocked . . . and um so with (son) from the time he was, you know, he was one, and starting to dabble in visual arts, I remember feeling quite afraid, you know, how to do this, you know, how to nurture him . . . so as he's grown, I have learned a ton about art and not just technique, besides being personally blocked when it come to visual arts, I also didn't really engage in, as a consumer of art, right, I thought, I don't know what's good and what's not and I don't understand the culture and so he's just opened all the doors for me and from everything to understanding the process . . . I mean like obviously there is individuality and uniqueness in there, but to be able to watch, how he does things and when he shares what it's like for him, um and sometimes I can just look at a piece he does and realize, it's so profound that, you know, it's just awe inspiring, where does this come from, I know it's not coming from me (laughs) right, it's nothing I've implanted . . . I would say that, one of his big interests is um is graffiti art right now and so that in addition to the art form, itself you have this whole culture around it, that challenges things like legalities, what is ethical and why do people do art for free, right, . . . I mean I'm pretty clear that I don't agree with when graffiti artists do it on private property, I don't think it is good to do it on people's homes, or fences, or businesses, that's a no no in my books . . . when it comes to most signage, businesses can do whatever they want and have things like the little signs you see on the traffic light poles and so on and so the one day (son's name) just said : 'how come they can do that and artists can't' and then it gets you looking at capitalism and how money suddenly validates things and so on.*

*Gurus and zen.*

***'Mom its OK, don't worry, people are born, they live, they die, it's a happy ending'***

Tanya

*She was very zen-like when she was quite young and I guess this was another thing that made me rethink it, she said, she is in the bathtub, she's 3.5 years old and she says, you know playing with her sponge and she says 'you know*

*mum when I grown up I'm going to have 2 children, and they are going to be so cute . . . a boy and a girl and she said 'its too bad you wont meet them' and I said why, why wouldn't I meet them, she said 'oh well you'll be dead' and I thought, but people live a long time, why would I be dead, and she says 'mom its OK, don't worry, people are born, they live, they die, it's a happy ending' and I thought what a zen concept, OK, alright, I'll just let go of that idea of me not seeing my grandchildren but she was just totally fine with it and its interesting because she doesn't really remember that anymore, but I do, that same year she told me that she was aware of when she became a person*

***'I remember when I knew that I was a me'***

*. . . . it was about 8 months after her birthday and she said, 'I remember when I knew that I was a me' and I go what does that mean, what do you mean and she says 'well, when you where singing happy birthday to me and I looked around I saw these people and I realized that all those people were there just for me on my birthday and I am my own person' and again it's a really neat concept because of when they come out of being an infant into their own consciousness right, an infant really is quite zen and one with the world, like everything is a part of them and then they start coming to into their own consciousness and realize , my me-ness, but to know it, and then to have your child say it was . . . quite mind blowing.*

***'I bet you it was that place before I was born'***

Carol

*He was 3 . . . so it was many months after the death of my Nana . . . we were getting ready for bed the one night and I was just missing her, so I was crying a bit, and he said 'why are you crying' and I said well 'I miss Nana' and he's like, 'she died' and I said 'yep, she died' and he said 'where do we go when we die?' - so I'm about to tell him all the theories, right, before I get a word out of my mouth, he says 'I bet you it was that place before I was born' . . . so I shut up, and I just felt so humbled and I felt that I was in the presence of a, you know, a Guru, at that moment and I thought OK, enough said, um and I mean, for my spiritual beliefs they are eclectic, I'm open minded I don't feel like I really know what 'the place' is, you know, after we die, um but that, you know, description of it certainly was very satisfying at that moment. . . . I mean I had kind of carried it as a growing belief, since early parenthood that um its not the parent's job to transfer all the information to the child, certainly the*

*child is a teacher as well, um, but sometimes, like with that instance, it just felt big, that it was a big teaching, um I felt very humbled, also relieved that I didn't have to have all the answers for him (laughs) and um it was a very human moment, you know, I felt like we were standing on common ground.*

### *Other*

#### **Not so much what she did, but how I wasn't as comfortable letting her go**

**Mandy**

*. . . (my daughter) has a friend . . . and the family is from Russia and they live in an apartment near us and my daughter went for a play date one day there and , I don't know, it sticks out in my memory because, no so much what she did, but how I wasn't as comfortable letting her go on the play date and just for her, you know, her friend is just like any other kid . . . but her parents don't really speak , because their English is not as strong um and the child is a lovely little girl and . . . I was very nervous and I grew up in an apartment, so it, I don't know if it was the apartment or I had never met the Dad and I always met the parents before and I probably have been to the houses before too and so letting her go to me was very , and a bit torn, but I mean I know that there really comes a point where you have to let them go . . . but yeah I think it was just her, her complete, you know, lack of concern where I was just torn about it and I have never been torn about them going to anybody else's house. . . I felt very nervous about letting her go and I, I, I think it comes from a negative place. . . I didn't want her to go, 'cause I didn't know where she was going . . . and she's just completely open minded and willing to accept different things, and since having my children I have definitely become more open minded and tried to accept new things and try new things for their sake and I'm greatly influenced by them and their openness.*

#### **Hadn't thought about that . . .**

**Eve**

*he bit her and drew blood and that was the first time that I was so angry with him, the boy that I love so much, hurt the girl that I love so much and I had never encountered that and that, that I would be so torn between being so angry with him, but still loving him*

**Out of nowhere**

Abby

*. . . I told her, all weddings are happy because they are celebrations, so you know, just getting caught off guard by questions such as that, both my husband and I as parents try to give the best possible answer that we're not influencing them, but hopefully giving them an answer that gives the broadest world view and the most positive . . .*

When son asked Nana about her belief in god and the Loch Ness monster.

Abby

*. . . this caught my mother-in-law off guard and she thought 'oh dear what do I saw to him, because I'm not the parent' and so she just answered honestly.*

Jill

*It definitely is usually a surprise factor when these things come out. Um, usually I have to kind of sit back and think and try and figure out what she really wants to know, like what's bothering her, because . . . if I don't answer the right question, she gets very frustrated right away, so if I think she wants some kind of information and that's not what she is aiming for, then things tend to deteriorate. So I usually, I can remember kind of sitting and thinking about it and to questioning her a bit about, you know, what was actually said, what she was she worried about, so thinking of it like a puzzle to work out before I am ready to actually discuss my own beliefs, and why we believe what we believe or not believe. . . it is kind of interesting because we don't, its not, it wasn't a big part of our lives at all, it was like, we don't believe that's all there is to it, but when you start getting questioned about it, especially from somebody who is stressed about going to hell you . . . start thinking so where does that, where does my belief come, my lack of belief come from, what do I base that on, why is that reassuring to me, not to believe, whereas its, it would be more reassuring to her to actually believe.*

*Speaking of socialization -- Bidirectionality: Child influencing parenting.* In the introduction, I spoke briefly to the issues of stability and change in relation to parent-child socialization. Part of the difficulty in *measuring* socialization has been how to measure change and stability. Historically, socialization was investigated from the point of view of how well a child's values matched a parent's values and/or



the degree to which influences beyond the parent impacted the child's adherence, or lack of, to a parental value. These kinds of ideas did not allow for the transformation of values and the concept of bi-directionality moved us away from unidirectional facsimile transmission ideas. The mums in this study note that sometimes they were surprised that they couldn't mould their children, or that they mellowed somewhat over time in terms of their children adhering to beliefs, for example, and that it is not necessarily their desire to have their children take on values, or beliefs, or social/cultural practises. Rather they indicated their wish for their children to make up their own minds. This idea of mums not necessarily wanting their children to take on their values presents an interesting comparison to issues in the socialization literature, here are a few examples:

Jill

*I can certainly remember times arguing with (daughter's name), oh there's a brilliant one where she decided that lemons were vegetables and there was no convincing her that lemons were not vegetables I explained to her that they grew on trees . . . that they had seeds inside of them, . . . I showed her a picture of a lemon tree (laughs) I did everything I could think of to explain to her that lemons grew on trees and were not vegetables . . . So, I think from that I kind of learned there is only so far you can go . . . so sometimes they just wanna be right and it doesn't hurt me, so they can be right.*

Mandy

*But I never questioned who I was until I had children . . . so I've made always made that effort to ingrain in them different things, or nothing, like let them make their own decisions, based on, like they ask a lot of questions about religion and I was raised in the church and that's not what I want to do for them, I want them to make that decision, so I answer all their questions as best as I can and try to let them decide.*

Abby

*But certainly the questions that they ask, force us to think about the kinds of answer we give them, in order to let them decide for themselves, and yet, hopefully set them on a path where they think critically about everything that they see in life . . . as parent try to give the best possible answer that we're not*

*influencing them, but hopefully giving them an answer that gives the broadest world view and most positive.*

*Um, I love the fact that my children are comfortable enough asking questions, I love that they ask questions, um, you know, we've always kind of taken a scientific approach to everything and encouraged that kind of, you know, explore for yourself and question things and so the fact that they feel comfortable to do that, were very happy about and my son at 5 comes up with the deepest questions and he asked the other day . . . 'was it night or day when the world first started' and (laughs) I had no answer and I said, 'I have no idea' and so what do you think?*

Tanya

*I had an inherent belief that you could sculpt your children . . . you know, if I modelled my beliefs and we lived a certain lifestyle that that would just naturally be instilled in her and I was very shocked to find that that wasn't the case repeatedly . . . so I soon realized that children have their own minds which was shocking to me, I really thought that we could sculpt their minds and . . . I know that this is like a long debate and all the stuff that I learnt in education didn't prepare me for parenthood.*

*I think it occurred to her, all on her own, think she made the connections all on her own, just by the fact that people singing*

*I thought well if it makes her feel good and makes me feel good, what's the harm in it and so I loosened up a lot on my hard line on some of that stuff and um yeah, I think through parenting you, I mean you go into parenting being very – I am going to do things this way and you know for sure and then you have your own and things happen and you realize, OK, you have to be more flexible than that, I think if anything she's taught me flexibility in my standards, my morals (laughs) loosened my morals.*

Carol

*I mean like obviously there is individuality and uniqueness in there, but to be able to watch how he does things . . . you know, its just awe inspiring, where does this come from, I know its not coming from me and also the nature of his art.*

*He's a pretty open minded person and we've strived to keep his, um critical thinking alive and well and encouraged him to question, a lot, . . .*

Eve

*I realized that I was , I changed the way I grew up with the silence about sex . . . so that if anything, if any problems arise in the future that they'll feel they can come home and talk about it, to help them make the right choices.*

*Like he influenced me to keep the lines of communication open to my kids in all areas and not just the areas I feel comfortable with . . . and letting them ask me these questions, so that if they are going to have sex that they do it with protection, that they are protected in more ways than one, so that they realize that its just not physically, its emotionally you become effected, yeah and that's why I try to talk to them about that all the time . . . not all the time, but you know, whenever the need arises (laughs)*

*. . .but you know I reflect on that moment and think, you know, I handled it fairly well and I had broken the cycle from my mother and you know, I knew I had made a change, so my children will be better off, because I made a change for the better in that respect and just like my kids are going to have to change some of the things that I did, right. . . because I'm not perfect and I make lots of mistakes and I know they are going to be saying, I'm not going to be doing what mum did.*

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The main purpose of the present study was to get descriptions of child influence from the mothers perspectives and the Mums who participated in this study were able to describe particular incidents in which their child(ren) said or did something that influenced the Mum's own values, beliefs or a social or cultural practice. Mums shared that there were a couple of incidents where their child's influence was through something another person said.

Values, standards, and customs or social practices are the substance of socialization (Grusec & Davidov, 2008) and as can be seen in the examples from the Mums' interviews it is not necessarily the case that the child changed a value or belief but most certainly gave Mum pause to think about what the child was asking. Certainly the descriptions provided by the mothers in this study give us insight into how they experienced these events. Also, strict adherence to a particular value or belief or custom is not necessarily the goal of socialization. Here are a couple more thoughts from the mums when thinking about child influence and socialization.

Mandy

*... since having my children I have definitely become more open minded and tried to accept new things and try new things for their sake and I'm influenced greatly by them and their openness.*

Mum is very self aware, in describing her family she talks about:

Rachel

*I'm an only child. I'm quiet, I never knew it would be quite this loud (this is in reference to her family) ... it wasn't something he said (her son) it was an incident that happened and it was probably one of the worst things that ever happened to me in my life. It means I've had a very sheltered life but um ... it made me really, really, really sensitive about other kids, who make mistakes and not to judge the parents, not to talk badly about the child ... if a kid does something wrong, I would say, give him another chance, give him many chances but guide them and work together and don't humiliate the parents and say their child is bad, that the child is going nowhere ... look if we start labelling kids at age ... 4 or 5 years old, then that kid is going to become what you say, and yeah, that's what I really learnt not to judge other children harshly and try to keep an open mind.*

Yvonne

*Umm, no but just what you were saying before about um something about influence, something has influenced you the way we think, I didn't think that, I always thought I don't know how much is getting through to him, so for him to come up with that, it was sort of reassuring that, oh, oh OK, so yeah, he is absorbing some of these (laughs) social or what am I trying to say ... social norms or whatever, you know ... and also about I've got to be careful (laughs) next time I want to feel sorry for myself.*

The mothers offered many different utterances as examples of their children influencing them and their thoughts, reflections, behaviours that these utterances engendered. So, one process by which the child influences parents (bi-directionality) is through what they say – utterances are offered as the events or processes of socialization. Utterance as an event addresses Lollis and Kuczynski's (1997)

observation that even though bi-directionality is seen as a given in developmental psychology that the processual and conceptual frame was lacking. Their call for qualitative studies in part has guided this present study and yielded the descriptions included in this present study. Also, given the descriptions and reflections the mothers provided point us to the idea that the utterances had/have meaning(s) for the mothers, these utterances were not empty talk, the child was 'speaking' to the values, beliefs, and cultural practices held by the mothers and others in the children's social worlds. Meaning and utterances as events fit nicely with dialogism.

*Doing something with an utterance – utterance as an act, being as an event.  
Dialogism speaks to process of bi-directionality.*

. . . an utterance is not merely *what is said*, it does not passively reflect situation that lies outside language. Rather, the utterance is a deed, it is active, productive; it resolves a situation, brings it to an evaluative conclusion (for the moment at least), or extends action into the future . . . Discourse does not reflect a situation, it *is* a situation (Holquist, 2002, p. 63).

What I had come to know about language was from cognitive and representational terms; that is, language is a way in which the world 'out there' was represented so two or more individuals could converse. Over time as I had the opportunity to code more utterances, especially a set of utterances from playground bullying interactions (Fisher, Rielly, Rahey & Craig, 1998; Fisher, Rielly, Pepler, & Connolly 1998), the coders and I felt the coding scheme, although well operationalized, was not adequately capturing what was happening, it felt like something was missing. The exact same utterance at the beginning of a playground interaction felt very different when used 3 minutes later.

I was introduced to Bakhtin's *dialogism* much later and the idea that an utterance was an act and not a representation opened up a whole new world for me to understand language and it now I could see a compelling social framework for language. In reference to coding utterances I now saw that the

words of the utterance did not determine the meaning of the utterance which outlines a completely different way of coding language.

### *Making Meaning*

... actual meaning is understood against the background of other concrete utterances on the same theme, a background made up of contradictory opinions, points of view and value judgements (Bakhtin, 2002, p.281).

Although the definition of socialization focuses on values, beliefs, and social or cultural practices, the incidents discussed by the Mums in this study also raise the idea that socialization is about making meaning. For example, a child is exposed to a different set of values, beliefs, and cultural practices in her classroom, how does she make meaning of her friends' belief in God when she her Mother does not believe and she has not been raised this way? In the example, in this study, she asked her Mum questions: *so how come you don't believe in god?*, which for this Mum, initiated her thinking not only about her own belief system but her believes in relation to her child and her child negotiating these differing beliefs on a daily basis in the classroom. Framed this way, meaning is not necessarily about some big 'T' truth but about meaning in relation to other people. What is the meaning in relationship to each other?

Jill

*So it hasn't changed my belief system, but it's . . . changed how I see belief systems . . . So her . . . questions . . . have made me think a lot about why people have religion, what its used for and um that it is not necessarily an uniformed position . . . so the reassurance that she saw her friends getting from this idea that there was somebody out there that was looking out for them . . . wasn't in her life, made me realize, OK you know some people need a belief system that is grounding for them in the same way as intellectual pursuits are a grounding for our family*

Tanya

*I thought well if it makes her feel good and it make me feel good, what's the harm in it and so I loosened up a lot on my hard line on some of that stuff.*

Nora

*I'm not brown right Mummy . . . and it hurts me sometimes to have him think like that, because I don't wanna, I don't want him to think that there is something wrong with him.*

Eve

*And that was the first time that I was so angry with him . . . that I would be so torn between being so angry with him, but still loving him.*

Abby

*Its all about believing right and its lovely and magical and feels great good um so I think that they get a lot from the media but also too what we allow them, you know, that we create opportunities for things to feel magical so for that belief thing, yes. . . The whole Santa and even the Easter Bunny, let them believe, let them have that, . . . but then, you know, trying to hide all our tracks, how do I lie around this, so I suppose that's a bit of challenge as to, you know your moral beliefs -- should you be lying to your kid.*

These examples point to meaning in relation to other people. So a Mum's belief or value may not have changed but she considers what this value means for her child and in relationship with her child. Examples such as these also point to the idea that individuals can 'hold' several beliefs simultaneously. For example, I may not believe in Santa or the Easter Bunny while my children do, but I place value in the belief that it creates opportunities to feel magical in the same way as happening upon a joyous celebration on the beach. It seems to me that the examples shared by the Mums in this study point to socialization not only in reference to coming to know or accepting the values, standards and customs of society but also making meaning of values and beliefs. This idea of the child 'using' an utterance to increase his or her understanding fits nicely with Bakhtin as interpreted by Holquist (2002):

In dialogism, life is expression. Expression means to make meaning, and meaning comes about only through the medium of signs (p. 49).

As noted the goal of the present study was to get Mums' perspective on child influence to elucidate the concept of bidirectionality and the active nature of the child. The mums in this study provided many examples of how their child influenced them and the main themes were: why I believe what I believe but in reference to you; God, the Loch Ness Monster & Superheroes; Examining a Parenting Practice – What we Say and Do; Intentional Parenting Practices; Intergenerational Transmission – Not: Making a change in parenting; What other people see, say, and do; Gurus and Zen; and Other themes. The Mums also spoke directly to socialization and the idea that their goal is not always for their children to take on values, beliefs, and/or social/cultural practices wholeheartedly. Finally, the idea that what their children say has meaning points toward utterances as acts.

In the next section I will examine the idea of multiple sources of influence as described by the mums in this study.

### *Multiple sources of Influences*

Another area of interest in the parent-child socialization literature is the idea that there are multiple influences on socialization. I am working from the premise that there are multiple source of influence in a child's and a parent's life. In this section I will provide examples from the incidents described by the mums. Often Mums would mention were a child got an 'idea' from when she first described the incident of child influence. The following is the prompt question used if mothers did not mention where their child may have gotten an idea from. I also used this question to more



fully explore mothers' perceptions on where her child may have gotten an idea from.

The following is the question I used as a prompt followed by some of the description from mums.

**Do you recognize where your child may have heard this, or gotten the idea or this phrase from?**

***Parents, peers, media, and the child.***

*Yvonne*

*He probably would have heard it from us . . . again, we're teaching him, we're trying to teach him how to, because he likes to sulk, so we're trying to teach him, when you're upset, then you need to come and say, I'm upset because of X, Y, and Z and not just sit there and sulk.*

*Rachel*

*And you know what I see those qualities in me, that's probably why they concern me more, because I recognize them and there are things about me I don't like . . . yeah and we don't want other people to know about .*

*Jill*

*Because in her class there are several very religious students and um, we are not a religious family, and so she finds it a little bit stressful when they start talking about what god wants from us and what we have to do in order to go to heaven and that sort of thing and I would say that our cultural practices are pretty much atheist . . . definitely from school . . . two of whom she is very good friends with, and she spends time in their houses and sees, uses different things, and she comes home with lots of questions about that.*

*Nora*

*It was another kid in the playground, yeah, but one thing me and his father talked about later on is where that child would have something like that, like we tried to figure out if it would have been from, you know, his family, or did he see something on TV because I mean it was not an issue for any of the other kids but for him to even have said that . . . like it was a negative that he was brown, so we couldn't figure out where he might have heard that from.*

Carol

*He's a pretty open minded person and we've strived to keep his critical thinking alive and well and encouraged him to question a lot.*

*Um that one I really, really, couldn't say, because he was so young. I was his primary caregiver and he wasn't going to other caregivers at all, . . . you know, um no idea.*

Tanya

*Yeah, yeah, I don't know, I think it was, I think she, I think it occurred to her, all on her own, I think she made the connections all on her own, just by the fact that people were singing and she looked around and 'why are they singing', they are singing for me, who is me.*

*Yeah, no, I guess it was just kind of like do you believe in fairies kind of thing . . . media, I'm sure its media . . . I guess from her peer group and so going to friends' houses*

Paula

*Just born to him, I think a big part of that's just his wiring, a little bit of it is from parental influence, um you know, we've always talked to him about how to treat people and here we were watching a television show that was in contradiction to everything that we had said, ingrained in him . . . that's just part of who he is and it will never go away*

*But it came from her as well. That made me feel really good because I felt that the ceremony of his passing . . . was not something that she was shutting out, it wasn't something that she never wanted to remember again and she got some solace out it, that I was hoping they would get and others as well . . . it just, it shocked me when she said it, I was shocked that she understood, . . . but she knew that that song said that in it. . . I chose that song because I wanted to influence them but didn't really think they would really fully grasp it at their age, at the time she was 5 and a half. . . . To be honest with you I didn't know if they, I didn't know what they were going to remember, or hear, or understand, or even if they going to make it through the whole ceremony in general, but the song had significance for my husband and I, but it also had significance for the event.*

Abby

*Um, oh, definitely, we know that as parents they pick up on, they feed off of how we react to situation, they take on the sensibilities that we have . . . so we're letting our children decide for themselves but yet being very honest with how we feel and not diminishing how they feel also. . . . certainly from the media, books, and movies, there is always that sense of you know, that children's book that got turned into the movie . . . oh the train that takes them to the North Pole with Santa Claus . . . the Polar Express . . . its all about believing right and its lovely and magical and feels great good um so I think that they get a lot from the media but also too what we allow them, you know, that we create opportunities for things to feel magical so for that belief thing, yes.*

### **It is also about what was not said**

Mandy

*She was described by an event . . . to me it was just, it was very influential in that, how children see everyone on the same basis and their . . . I guess their opinions are formed by events that happen, so my child chose to describe this other child 'as the one that went to China' because that event determined who this child was to her. . . . she wasn't described by her outward appearance. So I've always tried very hard to move forward making, not making those comments to her, like the Chinese person or the black person, just the person comes first and those descriptors follow . . . I think that it is we have not used those descriptors*

In the present study Mums either easily identified themselves or other sources as influences, however, that there are multiple sources of influence is well accepted by the mums and that includes temperament and the idea that the child is developing his or her own mind, that the child also brings something to the interaction that may not be identifiable to 'other' social sources. For examples, Mums expressed: '*it came from her as well*'; '*just born to him*'; and '*it just occurred to her*'.

*Developmental.* The idea that there are multiple sources of influence in parent-child socialization is borne out by the above examples. Mothers could identify

sources of influence and often spoke about these spontaneously. Mothers could recognize ideas from themselves and acknowledged that often the child would also identify the source of different ideas, e.g., friends at school talking about God or something that was said by another child on the playground. Also, in the above examples we see that sometimes the child is not the direct influence. For example, the one case a mother talked about her son being described as a menace and we can see here how other influences (e.g., the father of a neighbourhood child) are brought to bear on parent-child socialization. I was surprised that multiple sources of influence did not turn out to be a major focus of the mums' descriptions. Yes, they acknowledged other sources of influence but the discussion was not about how they were trying to prevent their children's exposure to these the incidents they described, but more so how they were dealing with it, what it meant to the child or what it might mean for their children in the future. Here I am reminded that while the focus in developmental psychology has been developmental models, for example, evolutionary, cognitive, or social, these did not hold deep interest for the mums.

*Dialogism speaks to multiple sources of influence.* For Bakhtin, utterances carry the voices of others. For one Mother it was the absence of voices in her daughter's utterances that was defining; Mum did not hear the voices she had heard as a child that were discriminatory and exclusionary. In addition to voices we also have the concepts of addressivity and active responsivity. When one mother's son asks: *I'm not brown, right Mummy*, we see the child addressing not only his mother but the utterance is also in active responsive to another source of influence -- a child who said this little boy was too brown to play with. The child addressing this to his Mum

is not asking what the color of his skin is, but is asking whether or not in his mother's opinion he is the kind of brown that would prevent him from playing with his peers. And Mum takes an active response stance to this. As she noted, it is not that she does not realize her son has brown skin but she was shocked that it was an issue. This last incident took place in the playground and context has been seen as an important element in parent-child socialization, we turn now to context and how it is addressed by the mums in this study.

### Context

Along with bi-directionality and multiple sources of influence the development literature has noted that socialization takes place in differing contexts, the home, school, at bedtime, When Mums describe the critical incident of how the child influenced her, how is the context framed, what role does it seem to play? This question is linked to the research question:

**Would you please tell me more about the context in which this took place – where were you or were you engaged in a particular activity, were there other people around?**

**Just doing those every day things:**

Jill

*We'll be sitting at the table (dining room) doing something, you know, doing a craft project or something like that and these things will kind of just pop out. . . I picture it sitting at the table doing something.*

Tanya

*Yeah well she did tell me about it at the time, um most of her, yeah most of her comments are, its just the two of us, sort of, you know, on a walk, or at the mall.*

Nora

*I was just sitting off to the side while he was off playing with his friends and um that when he came up to me and he told me that his friend had said that he wasn't going to play with him because he was brown*

*You know we're at a mall*

Mandy

*She told me at home, like . . . she was telling me the story about who she played with at school that day, so, I think we were just at home . . . 'cause I would always pick her up from school and yeah, she was just telling me about who she played with and the story was about she played with that girl.*

Yvonne

*At home . . . I went downstairs and he came down.*

*Yeah he just happened to be with me and they were on sale, yeah, we were still able to have conversation about it on way to pay for it and in the car . . . on the ride home, I explained more.*

Carol

*Getting ready for bed one night and I was just missing her, so I was crying a bit.*

*We were out driving, because we had actually seen some of the signs and we were in the middle of a conversation about graffiti*

Paula

*I was sitting in her room, I was sitting in her room on her bed, and she was standing in front of me and I don't remember why I was overwhelmed at that time but it was within the first 2 or 3 weeks after the funeral.*

*Watching a show.*

Carol

*Just driving.*

Abby

*We were at a beach and there was a wedding.*

*um, that it was the only kind of 2 days of vacation that we are taking this summer, so we were together and I was in a very happy place because I wasn't working and I was spending time with my children and to have this wedding kind of spontaneously take place on this beach . . . it was very emotional, you know, because her and I were standing, it was just very picturesque, we were standing on the beach, and the sun was setting and we were watching this wedding and you know I said to her afterwards one day we'll dance at your wedding and, you know, just those kind of forward thinking thoughts*

*(Loch Ness Monster)*

*You know what, I think it happened in the same way that a lot of the interesting questions come up, I think they were just driving in the car and that's usually when a lot of interesting questions come up with me and them, you know sitting in the back seat and they will just through out a question that I have no idea where it came from and so I believe that that was where it was, they were driving or just in a very quiet spot and I think it happens, you know, they're looking out the window and their mind is just going around and then they have, and something pops in there and*

Rachel

*Playing with neighbourhood kids.*

*When I'm just walking around . . . gardening . . . getting changed.*

Eve

*While I cooked and all that . . . grabbed something from the kitchen.*

*Like I have to find time to talk about it and when it bothers me so much I just can't wait for the best time, I just make it the best time.*

In regard to context, the predominant theme seems to be that the incidents of child influence take place in every day, mundane, contexts – driving, going to the mall, at the playground, getting ready for bed. In some instances the context was more salient in regard to a particular issue being raised; for example, seeing a Jewish wedding take place at a beach may trigger thoughts about future choices when you grown up in a Jewish and Christian family, or a child seeing his or her mother crying

in reference to grief is a context of giving comfort. But another context also was identified by the mums and those are spaces where the child has an opportunity to raise an issue: *'just in a very quiet spot, looking out a window'*; *'the just two of us, on a walk'*; *'sitting at the table doing something'*.

*Developmental.* As Goodnow (1997) suggests parent-child socialization (e.g., bi-directionality and multiple sources of influence) takes place everyday and in individual and broader contexts and this was also seen in the mums' description in this study. The above examples suggest it is the contexts of daily life (e.g., driving, sitting at a table, walking in the mall) where influence takes place. We do also know that these examples were linked to other contexts as well. For example, in the case where one daughter talks about knowing when she became a 'me'. This young girl is linking utterances across time and space from the context of her birthday party to the context of a conversation with her mother. Similarly, for the daughter who was interested to know why Mum does not believe in God, she is linking school contexts to home contexts. In a slightly different vein for the Mother who had heard that children hear typically hear about sex from peers, we see an example of how public education is then brought to a family context. I think these examples help us move toward Goodnow's suggestion that we understand how dyadic behaviour takes place in individual and broader contexts. Also, the contexts described by mums and the work in socio-cognitive domains suggest that those quiet times and moments in interaction may afford the child the opportunity 'raise' socialization issues.

In several incidents we see the context, not as giving rise to an idea necessarily, or having a particular script but rather as opening or a space to raise ideas



or for the child to express thoughts regarding a value, belief. In the incidents described in this study it was usually in a dyadic context.

*Dialogism speaks to the issue of contexts.* As Voloshinov<sup>4</sup> (1995) suggests, “contexts do not stand side by side in a row, as if unaware of one another, but are in a state of constant tension, or incessant interaction and conflict” (p. 124). This is no less the case in regard to utterances. Utterances are related dialogically to those that precede them. Preceding utterances may be those of the current addressee or of other addressees in the speaker’s social or dialogic sphere. “*Any utterance, no matter how weighty and complete in and of itself, is only a moment in the continuous process of verbal communication*” (Voloshinov, 1995, p. 140).

*Speech genres.* Bakhtin notes (2004) that contexts, like utterances, and speech genres are not isolated from each other. “Utterances are not indifferent to one another, and are not self sufficient; they are aware of and mutually reflect one another” (p. 91). In the above examples, we may not see the degree to which contexts are aware of and reflect one another, but if we address contexts from the mothers’ descriptions of the incidents we can see how an utterance from the playground is brought to the mother-child relationship (*I’m not brown, right Mummy*) and this is brought to context of the mother-father relationship where the Mum and Dad try to figure out where a young child might develop such racism from.

I had expected speech genres to be more salient in the description of the mums, that children were ‘parroting’ or ‘regurgitating’ phrases from elsewhere but this was not often the case. Mums’ acknowledged that others, themselves, etc., were

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<sup>4</sup> There is discussion regarding whether or not Bakhtin also published under the name of his contemporary Voloshinov (Holquist, 2002).

sources, or possible sources, but that their children were also bringing something to the interaction. For Bakhtin (2004), however:

a speech genre is not a form of language, but a typical form of utterances; as such the genre also includes a certain typical kind of expression that inheres in it. In the genre the word acquires a particular typical expression. Genres correspond to typical situation of speech communication, typical themes, and consequently, also to particular contacts between the meanings of words and actual concrete reality under certain typical circumstances (p. 87).

When I had been thinking about speech genres I had been focussing on spheres of activity, here Bakhtin offers expressiveness as a constitutive feature of a genre.

### Emotions

The question regarding emotions is included in the present study partly in response to my own surprise at the strength of emotion I felt in a similar child influence incident (please see *Situating the Study*) and to Bakhtin's focus on the expressive and evaluative components of utterances. The kinds of emotions and feelings that can be associated with child influence is linked to the research question:

**Would you please describe some of the emotions and feelings regarding this interaction.**

Rarely, did Mums report a singular emotion; rather, during the course of the interview Mums described several emotions in response to, and linked to, the critical incident (of child influence) provided.

Abby

*We were together and I was in a very happy place because I wasn't working and I was spending time with my children and to have this wedding kind of spontaneously take place on this beach and to be able to kind of watch it and um, you know, it was very emotional . . . you know, because her and I were*

*standing. It was just very picturesque, we were standing on the beach, and the sun was setting and we were watch this wedding and I said to her afterwards one day we'll dance at your wedding and, you know, just those kind of forward thinking thoughts and that made her smile . . . I love that she was taking it all in and she could sense that I was enjoying it and perhaps deep down she was wondering, you know what will my wedding look like or um, you know, will we do this, will we have a Jewish kind of thing at my wedding, I'm sure deep down somewhere in there she was thinking about that.*

Nora

*I think the first thing was shock, because, I think we just live in such a diverse culture now that I didn't, I would expect that more from adults than from kids, in terms of racism, but for a kid who was, he would have been around 5 or 6 at the time, to have said something like that, it hurt me to think that kids are a) thinking that way and b) enough to say something to another child um but initially it was shock and then it was hurt and then it was confusion, you know, do I try and just down play it or do I, you know, I never really gave it much thought before.*

*It was a wake-up call, I think that was the biggest thing for me because I kind of knew I always did that, but I thought it was just more so in my head.*

Mandy

*I know I felt guilty . . . in that I classify people probably by biases and racism and not as open and understanding as she can and I think that has really impacted how both my husband and I raise the girls*

*Yeah, I felt very uncomfortable and I don't know why, I felt very nervous about letting her go and I, I think it comes from a negative place. . . . well she is just so open and . . . I'm always amazed how they don't have biases. I didn't want her to go, 'cause I didn't know where she was going and I don't know if that had anything to do with them being Russian or English not being their first language and not being able to communicate well, it was just, I didn't know what she was going in to and she's just completely open minded and willing to accept different things.*

Tanya

*. . . OK, so the pink with the princess with the preference was a lot of shock and horror, disgust, feelings of failure (laughs) and then with the me situation, I felt, even the, both those situations with the me and the you live you die it's a*

*happy ending. I thought wow children are really profound, so I guess I was in awe and I think that was more like, out of the mouth of babes so much, so wise, for how little they have been exposed to the world . . . the water bottle, yeah that goes with the shock, horror and disgust (laughs).*

Yvonne

*I was embarrassed, oh yeah, I was very embarrassed, yeah, I was like wow, so my first thought was actually, it was funny, because my first reaction in my head was to deny it, and say no, no, I'm just you know, but before I spoke I knew, OK, he knows, so I said yeah, you're right, I'm over reacting. Ok I'll come up and we'll discuss what we're doing, so yeah, it actually, it worked, its like who is the parent here, but yeah, yeah, I was embarrassed.*

Jill

*Aside from surprise. It definitely usually a surprise factor when these things come out. Umm, usually I have to kind of sit back and think and try and figure out what she really wants to know.*

*So, sometimes they just wanna be right and it doesn't hurt me, so they can be right.*

*Yeah, you have to take it seriously.*

Paula

*I have to tell you, I felt a little bit ashamed that I didn't realize what I was asking him to watch. I also felt, I felt glad that he was able to show that to me . . . yeah, I have to say I was a little bit ashamed that I would have taken part in that type of behavior without really realizing it, if he hadn't been beside me.*

Eve

*I was scared to death that my 9 year old had already heard about sex through someone else at school.*

*So it scared me that I could be so angry with my child and I was afraid that I would resort to smacking or you know and I didn't want to and so, I think that was a pivotal moment in how I learned to deal with my anger towards my kids.*

Carol

*Um I felt very humbled, I mean, because of the context it was a very comforting and peaceful moment . . . but he was certainly providing strength in that moment.*

*I just feel awe when this stuff bubbles up.*

*It was just more of a jolt for me . . . had me almost shocked for just a second, right . . . it was one of those ah ha moments and then there was a sense of overwhelm mixed in there as well, because I thought, he's definitely got a point.*

Rachel

*I just felt horrible about the whole thing, ashamed, worried, all the negative human emotions . . . it was just horrible and I wanted to move . . . I was angry about him being called that name . . . not angry, but like hurt and scared*

*Oh well, I feel guilty that I might have created this . . . so I have some guilt about it, um and I think I should try better*

Abby

*I love the fact that my children are comfortable enough asking questions, my son comes up with the deepest questions. Um so how I feel about them asking questions like that, I think it is great. . . any time they ask deep questions or very observant questions it always take me by surprise and it shouldn't because after all these years I should know that they will ask, but it just comes out of nowhere right, these questions come out of nowhere and sometimes you're prepared for them and sometimes you're not.*

Paula

*When she said that to me, that made me feel really good because I felt that the ceremony of his passing, the funeral, was not something that she was shutting out, it wasn't something that she never wanted to remember again and she got some solace out of it, that's what I was hoping they would get and others as well . . . um and it just shocked me when she said it, I was shocked that she understood.*

In comparison to multiple sources of influence and context, emotions and feeling in regard to the incidents of child influence were more salient and discussed in more detail by the mums. Perhaps, emotional expression also fits with the idea that utterances are acts or events, and that these are meaningful events because they engaged the mum emotionally.

Emotions and affective states (e.g., see Cole & Tan, 2008; Dix, 1993) are important components of the parent-child relationship; lovability, for example, is a central theme in attachment theory. As noted by De Mol and Buysse (2008) parents report that child influence is massive, however, in the parent-child socialization literature less attention has been focussed on describing parental emotions or the affective impact of bi-directionality.

*Dialogism.* Bakhtin (2004) posits the expressive aspect of utterances as important. A word or a sentence, a dictionary definition of meaning cannot and does not convey an expressive aspect, expression is conveyed through the concrete use of an utterance in dialogic interaction. For Bakhtin, words are neutral, a word:

. . . is only a language tool for the possible expression of an emotionally evaluative attitude toward reality, but it is not applied to any particular reality, and this application, that is, the actual evaluation can be accomplished only by the speaker in his concrete utterance. Words belong to nobody, and in themselves they evaluate nothing (p. 85).

*Dialogism directs us to the importance of the emotional and affective components of socialization.* Dialogism directs us toward the evaluative and expressive aspects of socialization and in the present study paying attention to the emotions and feelings mothers experienced in response to an incident of child

influence is one way to inform our understanding of the massiveness of child influence.

Emptying people of what matters to them is to reduce them in ways that render them distorted . . . if not wholly alien.  
(Martin, Sugarman, & Hickenbottom, 2010, p. 57)

*Counterpoint.* As I continued along in my analyses particularly when I was looking at key words and repetitions Mums were using strong words and phrases to describe their emotional states in reaction to or their active responsive position to the incident of influence, words like: awe, mind-blowing, hurt, scared to death, shock, surprised . . . . In my own example I commented on my surprise at the strength of my reaction to a particular utterance of my son's but I had thought this was a more personal reaction and did not necessarily expect that this would emerge from the study data. That discussion and description focussed on emotions rather than context or multiple sources of influence is interesting.

The examples from the present study offer us an extraordinary view. Mothers described a wide range of emotions and feelings related to the incident of child influence, feeling: love, ashamed, worried, shocked, surprised, and in awe of their children. One aspect that did not come through from the transcriptions of the interviews was what felt like a deep-seated commitment and devotion from the mothers to their children. The interviews were fun and engaging for me and deeply moving but I was always left with a sense of the mothers' deep admiration for their children. As an interviewer I was not prepared for the range and depth of emotion that was experienced and would be shared.

## Discussion

In this section, I will initially address how Bakhtin's metatheoretical framework addresses some contemporary issues in developmental psychology and discuss more generally how the incidents described by the mothers in this student speak to bi-directionality, multiple sources of influence, contexts and emotions.

The present study framed from an *utterances as acts* perspective speaks to Lollis and Kuczynski's (1997) observation that although bi-directionality is a given in development psychology there are conceptual barriers to understanding how this takes place. Utterances as acts, offers us another way to understand the process of bidirectionality, multiple sources of influences and frames the idea of context differently – i.e., sphere of activity.

An example given by one Mum in this study nicely frames Bakhtin's concept of active responsivity when she says:

*Usually I have to kind of sit back and think and try and figure out what she really wants to know, like what's bothering her, because . . . if I don't answer the right question, she gets very frustrated . . .*

The incidents described in this study demonstrate that the children's utterances are most certainly attended to by the mothers in an active responsive manner. In the example above we get the sense that Mum is contemplating her responsive attitude and is preparing to address the issue her daughter raises. Another example of active responsivity is seen when Mum talks of her surprise that her daughter used the line 'everything is going to be alright' from the song Mum had purposively chosen to be played at the gathering to acknowledge her husband's passing. Mum takes her



daughter's utterance as an offer of solace – the gesture that she had extended to her daughter weeks before. Using the same example, we can also see the concept of addressivity, as Mum had chosen this song not only for the meaning it had for her and husband but to provide solace and this was particularly *addressed* to her children. The lyrics and associations of the song were addressed to her children in a hope that a active response solace could unfold. It was this solace that the daughter was able to address back to her mother who then took an active responsive stance to it. Framing utterances as acts, and inherent in these acts are addressvity and active responsivity we have one way to conceive of the process of bi-directionality in parent-child socialization. Multiple sources of influence and context, two areas of research focus in developmental psychology did not, however, seem to be salient issues for the mothers in comparison to emotions. It would seem that the mothers' experience of child influence (bi-directionality) highlights different areas of socialization than the research community. Mothers did discuss multiple sources of influences (do you know where your child might have gotten this idea from?) and the context (can you tell me a bit more the context, where were you, were there other people present?) but the emotional impact and the meaning 'derived' from this, the described critical incidents, were given much more focus.

The incidents and narratives shared in the present research provide wonderful data that demonstrate how Mums see their children influencing them, which was the primary goal of this research. Typically, parent-child socialization research has focussed on more meta- or super- ordinate categorizations of bi-directionality. One of my research goals was to provide a qualitative account that focussed on the

mothers' perspective of how her child(ren) influences her. I think these data provide us with an amazing and intimate view to understanding this important developmental concept of socialization and the related concepts of bidirectionality, multiple sources of influence, and context. I also think Bakhtin's meta-theoretical approach of dialogism informs our understanding, or at least provides other ways to view bidirectionality in parent-child socialization. Contained within these data are myriad of examples that elucidate more of Bakhtin's concepts and vice versa. When I asked one Mum about where her daughter might have gotten this idea from, she acknowledged that it came from something that Mum had done, something Mum had intentionally enacted to support her daughter: "*but it came from her as well*". In this example, there is ample room for discussion of the idea of *Internally Persuasive*

*Discourse*, discourse that is:

half-ours and half-someone else's. It creativity and productiveness consist precisely in the fact that such a word awakens new and independent words, that it organizes masses of our words form within, and does not remain in an isolated and static condition. It is not so much interpreted by us . . . as it is . . . freely, developed, applied to new material, new conditions, it enters into interanimating relationships with new contexts (Bakhtin, 2002, p. 345-346).

I think there is much more to say and develop around parent-child socialization and Bakhtin. Indeed, I think an important future direction is to use *dialogism* to frame socialization. Also, contained in this example is the idea that perhaps mothers do not see categories and ideas as distinctly as I do. My background is experimental psychology and repeatedly I have reflected on how this background and the driving principles of experimental psychology impact my research design and analyses. I think it is useful that ideas and variables are separated out but when I think of the examples in this study this separation does not fit with the mothers', the

informants', view. When mothers describe incidents of child influence they do not separate bi-directionality, where the influence came from, the contexts or emotions, all of these 'concepts' were described together to provide a picture of the incident as the mother saw it. Along with this idea is how bi-directionality, contexts, emotions, and multiple sources of influence are typically all reported and described together to provide a picture of child influence.

That I was surprised at how context and multiple sources of influence are intertwined – leaves me slightly shame-faced -- in retrospect it should not have been surprising but I did not see this until I looked at context separately (or tried to) from sources of influence, etc.. In several cases, the context of the utterance in which the child influenced the mum was in a mundane every day activity: at the mall, getting dressed, sitting around the table, getting ready for bed or driving a car. The child's utterance during this everyday interaction, however, tended to be 'brought in' from elsewhere, for example, a song, something a friend said or an event that linked a prior topic of conversation (scooters) or sparked a question related to values and customs (wedding on the beach). In the course of a day a parent may hear a statistic and make time to have a discussion with a child. These contexts are related to spheres of social activity and most definitely related to everyday activities – getting ready for bed, playing on the school ground, or buying a birthday present but these are not solitary events. The child influence of mother in the incidents discussed in this research suggest that the contexts or domains may have a different flavor. It seems that the context of these unexpected or surprising utterances tended to come out when the child and mother were together with or without a sibling, but it seemed to be more in

the context of a dyadic interaction rather than a group – these seem to be very personal moments. Also, in some instances mothers talked about how the influence took place across time, the influence may have started from a single incident but meaning from the utterance was carried forward the mums think about what the child said and what it means for them both, together, and individually. In discussions of personhood Martin, Sugarman, and Hickenbottom (2010) note that it is in our:

everyday contexts in which our actions and experiences are situated and from which they derive their meaning and significance. These contexts are saturated with social and cultural beliefs and practices constitutive of our forms of life with others . . . In contradistinction to both the a priori self-contained individual of modernity and the socioculturally determined invention of some postmodern theories this account holds that persons are the expressions of an agentic form of being, emerging, and developing through its embeddedness in sociocultural contexts (p. 68).

For me, this issue is an interesting direction for future investigation, an idea that these present descriptions of child influence support.

One of the thorny issues of parent-child socialization is the idea of similarity and difference. Historically, socialization was thought to happen or be successful when the child held the same values or beliefs as the parents. That difference, can also be a product of socialization, is clearly shown in these data where Mums talked about how they did not want to transmit racist comments or for their children to feel they could not talk to their parents about sex. In the case of racism, Mum acknowledges that she is not always aware that as an adult she uses unexamined phrases from childhood; phrases that once she speaks out loud allow her to see their discriminatory nature. It is of note that some of the mums in the study explicitly stated that is not their goal for their children to take on their values, beliefs, and social/cultural practices but rather to provide them with the skills to make up their

own minds and be critical thinkers. Mums did express surprise at their inability to influence their children at times or that they were surprised to see some of intentional socialization practices take hold.

### Conclusion

Mums were able to describe incidents of child influence (bi-directionality) which was the goal of the present study, and typically included in their descriptions multiples sources of influences, the context, their emotional reactions and the meaning the incident had for them. Also, *dialogism* provides a way to understand the mechanisms or processes of socialization through utterances as acts. The present study also addressed a suggestion in the literature for qualitative studies to help elucidate processual issues in parent-child socialization in particular that children's utterance as acts framed from Bakhtin's *dialogism*. Quinn-Patton (2002) offers three ways in which qualitative research informs our understanding of phenomena, by: making the obvious obvious, making the obvious dubious, and making the invisible obvious. I will now discuss how the these might be conceived of in the present study.

#### *Making the obvious obvious*

The mums in this study were able to describe incidents where their children said something that influenced the mums' values, beliefs, and or a social or cultural practice or custom. The call for a qualitative study or focus on micro-processes yielded examples of child influence. Asking mothers to describe incidents in which their child said or did something that influenced their values and beliefs was productive and yielded many examples. Children obviously influence their parents.

*Making the obvious dubious*

Much developmental research has focussed on how different components of socialization, that is, bi-directionality, multiples sources of influence, and contexts, contribution to the process. All of the these research areas were addressed at some point by the mums in their descriptions of the incidents. In respect to the present analyses I did not find that multiples sources of influence and context were areas that the mums' drew attention to and did not take great prominence. It is true that the Mums often described the context in which the child made a particular utterance and/or where they might have gotten this idea or saying from but rarely was it the primary focus. In comparison, however, emotional reactions and the meanings the mums derived from these incidents were a main focus on their discussion – these were meaningful events. The focus of research in parent-child socialization differs from the focus of the experiences of mums in this study. Mums did not ignore the role of multiple sources of influence or context, these were included and their contribution recognized and discussed, but it was the meaning and the emotion that were the primary focus of their experience.

It makes sense that in the research domain of parent-child socialization that multiple sources of influence and context have been primary area of focus as part of the discipline is to respond to critiques [the strength of parental contribution to socialization in comparison to peers or genetics, for example research by Scarr (1997) or Harris (2009)] and sometimes part of critique and the experimental method is to isolate variables to reduce noise in the data. In this instance, however, perhaps

the research focus does not match with the experience of socialization and the way in which socialization takes place in daily lives of people – where sources of influence are not isolated from one another and children and mothers enter into different contexts individually and together. In the example of where mother and child happen upon a Jewish wedding on the beach this context had ‘meaning’ for the child as she is raised in a Jewish and Christian home and so we can see how the context contributes to the question but that question also comes from the child’s daily life thus far – living in a culturally Jewish and Christian family where she is afforded the opportunity to make her own decisions about the various contribution of Jewish and Christian cultural and religion in relation to her own life. Hypothetically, this context may have had different influences for families with different cultural/religious backgrounds or for a child of Jewish-Christian background who was not afforded the space to determine the degree to which these backgrounds influence her life. The elements are all experienced together and also include the individuals’ histories. I include these thoughts and this example under the heading of making the obvious dubious because it was not until I started to think about the difference on the focus of emotion and meaning from the mothers’ perspective in comparison to context and sources of influence focus from the research literature did I question the assumptions and goals of contemporary parent-child socialization research – one seems to be to isolate and address relative contributes of sources of influence and context and the other to understand the process; not that these two goals are mutually exclusive but perhaps focussing on isolating out various contributions to socialization has rendered our understanding of parent-child socialization dubious.

Several times as I tried to section off my thoughts about Dialogism and during the inductive portion of my analyses I wondered if I should have just done the deductive first just to get it out of my system. I was so excited to finally have a chance to apply Bakhtin's dialogism to some 'real live utterances' I had difficulty focusing. The last time I had coded language data the project had been stalled. I had been coding utterances as mutually exclusive categories whose meaning was determined by the words in the sentence not by dialogic interaction. As I went through the utterances and 'derived' themes from the data, repeatedly I would return to developmental categories. Within these data there is evidence of intergenerational transmission, deliberate and intentional parenting practice reflected in child behaviour.

I found it difficult not to talk about developmental categories, it was not until it was pointed out to me did I actually see (or perhaps hear) the categories of *Gurus and Zen* and *God, the Loch Ness Monster, and Superheroes*. My foray into qualitative analyses has been a considerable learning experience and more experience will hone my skills.

In retrospect I fear Bakhtin may take umbrage with my design orientation. I had sectioned off pieces of addressivity and active responsivity, for example, to fit with the sections of bi-directionality and multiple sources of influence and once again I tended to treat these as mutually exclusive categories that lay beyond, and exert some influence, outside of the mother-child interaction. Utterances: as acts, as carrying the voices of others, and being linked to particular spheres of activity (or bi-directionality, multiple sources of influence, and context) are not inseparable and the



weight or contribute of each component does not lend itself to being sectioned off. Each of these elements (utterance as act, multiple sources of influence, context etc.,) is present and given any utterance or moment, contribute differently to the experience, but it is the experience of the speaker and the addressee that determine the meaning of the utterance, given a particular history and happenstance. The process of socialization and bi-directionality are not experienced in distinct elements or differential contributions, but rather experienced in the flow of mundane daily existence and experience. Historically, additive models based on discrete categories or entities within developmental psychology have helped us understand social and genetic contributions to development but not necessarily experience or the processes in daily life. Advances in statistical analyses that can take into account 'interactions' do not necessarily help us understand process.

As noted in the introduction there were critiques of the parent-child socialization, for example, in reference to genetic contribution and the role of peers, and it seems that some research focus has been to address these issues – so the driving force behind the research has been in response to critiques and not necessarily in understanding socialization in the daily lives of individuals – this may be one reason that less attention has given to understanding the process(es) of socialization. The incidents described in the present study demonstrate that mum's do recognize their child's influence on their values, beliefs and social/cultural practices and while context and multiple or outside sources of influence are apparent they are not the focus of mum's. Also, the concept of bi-directionality which is acknowledging that children do influence their parents and that the child is active in that process is borne

out by the described incidents, but also that it seems assumed or a given not just by developmental psychology but also by the mothers. Perhaps this is moving in to the third purpose of qualitative research.

*Making the hidden obvious*

What children say is one way in which socialization takes place – how children influence parents – but it is not simply that a statement is made, the utterances that mothers shared had meaning for the mothers and the mothers spoke freely about this meaning – here we have the chance to witness the active transformation of knowledge.

Perhaps socialization is not just about the act of influence but also how the individuals address and actively respond to what is said and how what is said speaks to meaningful aspects of the individuals lives. A focus on utterances and Bakhtin's dialogism offer another exciting venue from which to study parent-child socialization. Other researchers have focussed on language as transformative (Wertsch, 1991) but it seems that utterances as acts and as part of the process of socialization have been hiding in plain sight.

Also, the mothers in this study reported incidents of child influence taking place in the mundane context of, or the happenings of everyday life, going to the mall, getting ready for bed, talking with your child after school – influence is not removed from daily life. Everyday life and all its messiness offers another way to investigate parent-child socialization to understand how the individuals make sense of multiple sources of influence, contexts, individual and socio-cultural factors and how individuals may highlight particular influences and how happenstance plays a role.

Socialization is not a series of isolated events removed from the daily lives of individuals these events are connected, the utterances individuals' speak stretch back and reach forward into the future. We are rooted in our daily lives which sometimes renders its import and magnitude in our understanding invisible.

*There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and the boundless future). Even past meanings, that is, those born in the dialogue of past centuries, can never be stable (finalized, ended once and for all) – they will always change (be renewed) in the process of subsequent, future development of the dialogue. At any moment in the development of dialogue there are immense, boundless masses of forgotten contextual meanings, but at certain moments of the dialogue's subsequent development along the way they are recalled and invigorated in renewed form (in a new context). Nothing is absolutely dead . . . (Bakhtin, 2004, p. 170).*

Finally, I would offer if we express the premise that utterances are acts that do things in the world, including making meaning, we are closer to social theory of language development.

*Lingering thoughts: Do betters and future wishes.*

The analyses in this present study are first run and cursory and I do not believe that this belittles their contribution. The mothers provided rich descriptions of incidents of influence by their children. I do think, nonetheless, that these descriptions contain much more subtlety than I gave voice to here. I believe further analyses of these data and similar studies will yield more detailed examination of the active transformation of values, beliefs, and social/cultural practices which will only help to inform our understandings of parent-child socialization.

Now having come to a resting point in the research process and the completion of the requirements for my Master's of Art degree, I see that

understanding the process of parent-child socialization, bi-directionality in particular, is difficult within the confines of the experimental psychology as I understood and experienced it. I have a strong training in experimental methods in Developmental Psychology and the theoretical underpinnings of the scientific method. I am used to divvying-up and sectioning off data, it has been the tradition, the method used primarily in the discipline. In Bakhtian terms ‘the discipline’ takes an active responsive position toward critiques, for example, how much do parents really influence their children, and research is then conducted to ‘address’ the critiques. The scientific method as a genre, perhaps is one of those instances where the genre constrains the amount of individuality that can be expressed. In the developmental literature on parent-child socialization and bi-directionality ‘the method’ does not allow room for and at times, does not value the lived experience of the developmental subject.

In differentiating between heteroglossia and dialogism, Farrell (1995) interprets Bakhtin: “dialogism . . . remains in its essential meaning a fairly transparent term: it implies genuine exchange of ideas between different people or different kinds of ideas . . . [H]eteroglossia implies only co-existence, dialogue interanimation” (p. 3). I came to the Child & Youth Studies program, in part, to learn about mixed methods, but it was not until I actually engaged in the process of using mixed methodology did I come to understand beyond an intellectual understanding how the different methods inform different understandings and open up new or, perhaps it is different, vistas. I had been working within a heteroglossic frame of understanding and now I feel I have entered into a more dialogic realm as I

(somewhat happily) struggle to give voice to the utterances contained within this research.

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## Appendix A



Brock University  
Research Ethics Board  
Tel: 905-688-5550 ext. 3035  
Email: reb@broku.ca

Certificate of Ethics Clearance for Human Participant Research

DATE: 10/15/2010  
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: CONNOLLY, Maureen - Child & Youth Studies  
FILE: 10-055 - CONNOLLY  
TYPE: Masters Thesis/Project STUDENT: Lianne Fisher  
SUPERVISOR: Maureen Connolly  
TITLE: Parent-Child Socialization

**ETHICS CLEARANCE GRANTED**

Type of Clearance: NEW

Expiry Date: 10/31/2011

The Brock University Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above named research proposal and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University's ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement. Clearance granted from **10/15/2010 to 10/31/2011**.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored by, at a minimum, an annual report. Should your project extend beyond the expiry date, you are required to submit a Renewal form before **10/31/2011**. Continued clearance is contingent on timely submission of reports.

To comply with the Tri-Council Policy Statement, you must also submit a final report upon completion of your project. All report forms can be found on the Research Ethics web page.

In addition, throughout your research, you must report promptly to the REB:

- a) Changes increasing the risk to the participant(s) and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the study;
- b) All adverse and/or unanticipated experiences or events that may have real or potential unfavourable implications for participants;
- c) New information that may adversely affect the safety of the participants or the conduct of the study;
- d) Any changes in your source of funding or new funding to a previously unfunded project.

We wish you success with your research.

Approved:

Michelle McGinn, Chair  
Research Ethics Board (REB)

**Note:** Brock University is accountable for the research carried out in its own jurisdiction or under its auspices and may refuse certain research even though the REB has found it ethically acceptable.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and clearance of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of research at that site.

## Appendix B

*Volunteers Wanted for Parent-Child Socialization Research Study*

*We are interested in talking to parents about  
how their children influence them*

We have a series of questions that we would like to ask parents who have a child 4- to- 10 years of age. In particular, we would like parents to tell us about a time when their child said something that influenced the way they thought about a personal value, belief, or a social or cultural practice. We expect to chat for approximately 1 hour.

This research is conducted under the direction of Dr. Maureen Connolly Department of Child & Youth Studies, Brock University. This project has received clearance from the Brock University Ethics Board (REB file # 10-055).

If you are interested in participating in this research study or would like to learn more please contact Lianne at 905 688 5550 ext 3381.

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Parent-Child Socialization Study  
Dept. of Child & Youth Studies  
Brock University  
Lianne 905 688 5550 ext. 3381

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Lianne 905 688 5550 ext. 3381

## *Volunteers Wanted for a Parent-Child Socialization Research Study*

***We are inviting parents to talk to us about how their children might influence  
parents' values, beliefs, or social and/or cultural practices.***

We have a series of questions that we would like to ask parents who have a child 4- to- 10 years of age. In particular, we would like parents to tell us about a time when their child said something that influenced the way they thought about a personal value, belief, or a social or cultural practice. We expect to chat for approximately one hour.

All information is kept confidential.

When this project is complete a summary of our finding will be mailed to you and results will also be presented at academic conferences and published in academic journals. The names of individuals will not be used.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

If you like to take part in this research study or you would like to learn more please contact:

**Lianne at (905) 688 5550 ext 3381 or [lianne.fisher@brocku.ca](mailto:lianne.fisher@brocku.ca)**

Lianne Fisher is a graduate student in Child & Youth Studies at Brock University and her research is being supervised by Dr. Maureen Connolly, a faculty member at Brock University. This project has received clearance from the Brock University Ethics Board (REB file # 10-055).

## Appendix C



## Initial Protocol

Protocol – when participant calls in or return phone message:

Contact First Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Contact Phone Number:

Date of First contact: \_\_\_\_\_

*Hi \_\_\_\_\_ it's \_\_\_\_\_ from Brock University. I'm calling about the study asking about how children influence their parents. You had (left a message on our answering machine/signed up at \_\_\_\_\_ indicating you were interesting in taking part). Is this a good time for you to talk? (If not, reschedule better time to call; if so then proceed with screening)*

RESCHEDULE: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

**If yes, a good time to talk:**

*We're in the process of getting in touch with people to tell them a bit more about what we're doing, and to answer any questions that they may have. This project is intended to understand how children can influence the way their parent(s) look at values, beliefs, or some of our social or cultural practices or customs. In particular we are interested what the child might have said in a specific incident and then what happened from there.*

*We're interested in learning a bit more about all of these things, and we're asking Mums or Dads to come to the university or I can come and visit you in your home to take part in this study.*

*Do you have any questions so far for me?*

*Do you think that you might be interested in helping us out with this project?*

Yes or - No  
(circle one)

**If no:** politely thank for taking the time to find out more about the study and conclude the conversation.

**If yes:**

*That's great.*

*May I just ask:*

**Son or daughter** under the age of 10 years  
(circle one)

May I ask how old your \_\_\_\_\_ is?

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Age of child)

*I would like to arrange a time to meet with you either here at the university or at your home, the interview should not take more than two hours and I would make an audio-recording of your responses.*

*Is there a particular day and time that we could meet?*

*Arrange interview date and time.*

*So our interview is set for: \_\_\_\_\_ (Day & Date) at  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Time)  
at \_\_\_\_\_ (location).*

*I will call you the day before to confirm or appointment and you can contact me  
at (give name and contact information) at any time if you need to reschedule or  
you have any questions or concerns.*

*Thank you very much for agreeing to participate and I look forward to talking  
with you.*

## Appendix D

Dear Participant:

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study investigating how children might influence parents' values, beliefs, or social and/or cultural practices. Lianne Fisher is a graduate student in Child & Youth Studies at Brock University and her research is being supervised by Dr. Maureen Connolly, a faculty member at Brock University. This project has received clearance from the Brock University Ethics Board (REB file # 10-055).

I am particularly interested in what children say that might influence how a parent thinks about different values, beliefs, or social or cultural practices, for example, and do parents recognize where the child may have heard this idea or where a particular phrase or idea may have come from. I have a series of questions that I would like to ask you and record your answers to.

This project has not been set up with the intention of inducing stress, however, as parenting can be stressful at times you may again reflect on negative events. In the event that reflection on negative events becomes troublesome attached to this document is a list of parenting and counselling resources that you can contact free of charge should you so choose. I do feel, however, that there may be positive benefits from taking part: reflection on positive and negative parent-child events and increased understanding of the circumstances that promote both positive and negative parent-child interaction.

I would like to stress that all information you provide is kept strictly confidential. Identifying information such as names and addresses are removed from material you provide to ensure privacy. All materials are kept in locked offices. Researchers are required by mandatory laws to break confidentiality agreements in case of suspected abuse or if information is subpoenaed by a court order.

When this project is complete a summary of our findings will be mailed to you and results will also be presented at academic conferences and published in academic journals. The names of individuals will not be used. Specific examples, however, will be part of the findings, but these examples will not be coupled with identifying information.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. You may decline to answer any questions you choose. If you are willing to take part in this study you will be asked to sign a consent form that indicates you have read the above information and that you are voluntarily agreeing to participate in this research.

I would be more than happy to discuss this research further with you to address any questions or concerns you may have. In addition, Dr. Connolly my supervisor may be contacted (905 688 5550 extension 3381). Concerns about your involvement in the study can be directed to the Research Ethics Officer at the University (905 688 5550 extension 3035). If you would like to participate in this research project please leave contact information for Lianne at 905 688 5550 x3381 and I will get back to you as soon as I can.

Yours sincerely,

Lianne Fisher, M.A. Candidate  
Department of Child & Youth Studies  
Brock University, St. Catharines ON

905 688 5550 (extension 3381, c/o Dr. Connolly)  
/lf

## Appendix E

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. M. Connolly, Professor, Department of Child & Youth Studies

Principal Student Investigator: Lianne Fisher, M.A. Candidate Department of Child & Youth Studies

I have been given and have read the Letter of Introduction provided to me by the interviewer conducting the research.

I understand that the purpose of this study is to examine how children might influence the way a parent thinks about a value, belief, or socio-cultural practice. I also understand that my participation will involve a voice-recorded interview in which I will be asked a series of questions.

I understand that completing the study will take approximately 1 hour.

I understand that my participation will bring only minimal risks, and these risks have been explained to me, along with the potential benefits of taking part in this study.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time, and for any reason, without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. If I choose to withdraw I understand that all information regarding my participation will be destroyed. For example, papers shredded and electronic files erased. I also, understand following the completion of the research project all data will be destroyed.

I understand that I may ask questions of the researchers at any point during the research process, or after having taken part in this study.

I understand that there is no obligation to answer any question that I feel is invasive, offensive, or inappropriate.

I understand that all personal information will be kept strictly confidential and that all information will be coded so that my name is not associated with my answers. I understand that, except for the unusual circumstances described in the Letter of Introduction, only the Faculty Supervisor and principal student investigator will have access to the data.

I understand that the results of this study will be distributed in academic journal articles and conference presentations, and that a summary of the results will be made available to me if I so choose.



As indicated by my signature below, I am consenting to take part in this research project, and I acknowledge that I am participating freely and willingly.

Name of participant:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Please Print)

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**This study has been reviewed and received clearance from the Brock Research Ethics Board (REB file 10-055).** If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in the study you may contact Dr. Maureen Connolly at 905 688 5550 extension x3381 or by email at [mconnolly@brocku.ca](mailto:mconnolly@brocku.ca). Concerns about your involvement in the study may also be directed to Research Ethics Officer in the Office of Research Services at 905 688 5550 extension 3035.

Feedback about the use of the data collected will be available in the Fall/Winter 2011, from Lianne Fisher, Department of Child & Youth Studies, Brock University. A written summary will be sent to you if you so choose.

Thank you for your help. Please keep a copy of this letter for your records.

## Appendix F

## Parenting Resources

If you would like to discuss any issues regarding parenting that may arise from our conversation here are 4 possible resources:

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### **Brock Students can access Confidential Personal Counselling**

To make an appointment call 905-688-5550 extension 4750 during regular office hours (8:30 - 12:00, 1:00 - 4:30) or by visiting the Student Development Centre (ST400) during office hours and make the call from there. You should be offered an appointment within the next 3 working days.

Every effort is made to see a student in crisis immediately. In such cases calling extension 3240 will get you the quickest response from our service.

For further information you can contact the Manager Les McCurdy-Myers.

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### *Parent Talk Information Line*

#### ***What is the Parent Talk Information Line?***

The Parent Talk Line is a telephone information line that the public may phone to speak with a public health nurse about any parenting issue.

#### ***Who is it for?***

The Parent Talk Line is for the entire Niagara Region community.

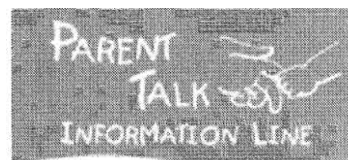
#### ***How can it help me?***

The Parent Talk Line offers services that include support and advice on parenting questions or concerns, referrals to the Healthy Babies Healthy Children program, presentation requests, and referrals to other public health and community resources. A public health nurse can help link families to services in the community.

#### ***Hours of Operation and Contact Information:***

Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m.  
905-688-8248 ext. 7555 or 1-888-505-6074

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**905-688-8248 or  
1-888-505-6074**

**Extension 7555**

**Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.**

Talk to a public health nurse  
about any parenting issue.

**Distress Centre Niagara is a 24 hour**

The Distress Centre of Niagara is a 24-hour, free, confidential telephone crisis intervention support service available to anyone in need in the Niagara Region. We conduct community education and outreach through workshops, community events and partnerships, in order to enhance support services and public trust in our communities.

"We provide support to individuals in distress or crisis and education to the Niagara community which assists people to take ownership of personal choices and manage their lives in a healthy manner"

St. Catharines, Niagara Falls & Area 905-688-3711

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**THE FAMILY COUNSELLING CENTRE**

Family and Children Services (FACS) is a voluntary service that is the Family Service Ontario agency for the Niagara Region. The Family Counselling Centre offers support and therapy groups, prevention and education programs, and professional counselling for individuals, families and children.

Call 905-937-7731 905-937-7731 ext 3390 or 1-888-937-7731 1-888-937-7731 ext 3390.

The program is also available in French at Centre de Sante Communautaire at 905-734-1141 905-734-1141.

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## Appendix G

Interview Questions after review of Information Letter and signing of Letter of Consent.

1. Interview is with: Mother or Father?

2. May I ask your birthdate please: \_\_\_\_\_

3. How many children do you have: \_\_\_\_\_  
(number of children)

4. What are the ages and gender of your children?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**If more than one child younger than age 10 years:**

5. Have you already decided which child would be the focus for today's questions?

**If yes:**

Which child is this (from list above)? \_\_\_\_\_

**If no:**

*OK, when I ask the first question can you also let me know which child you are thinking of please, if at all possible it would be great if the child is 10 years of age or under.*

6. I would like you to recall -- and then describe in as much detail as you can -- a particular time when your child -- or one of your children -- said something that influenced your personal values, beliefs or a social or cultural practice.

Prompts if parent does not spontaneously discuss:

Would you tell me what child it was that your **child said** or the phrase he/she used that influenced you, please:

I would just like to clarify which child (if applicable) you are referring too?

Do you recognize **where** your child may have heard this or gotten the **idea or this phrase from**?

Would you please tell me more about the **context** in which this took place -- where were you or were you engaged in a particular activity, were there other people around?

Would you please describe some of the emotions and feelings regarding this interaction:

Is there anything else you would like to tell me regarding this interaction?

7. Is there another time you would like to tell me about when your child said something that that influenced your personal values, beliefs or a social or cultural practice.

Prompts if parent does not spontaneously discuss:

Would you tell me what child it was that your **child said** or the phrase he/she used that influenced you, please:

I would just like to clarify which child (if applicable) you are referring too?

Do you recognize **where** your child may have heard this or gotten the **idea or this phrase from**?



Would you please tell me more about the **context** in which this took place – where were you or were you engaged in a particular activity, were there other people around?

Would you please describe some of the emotions and feelings regarding this interaction:

Is there anything else you would like to tell me regarding this interaction?

*Those are all the questions I have for you. Do you have any questions for me?  
In the Fall of 2011 I plan to send out a summary of the findings to the people who participated. On your letter of introduction there is contact information if you have any questions or concerns for me at a later date.*

*Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me today and share your experiences.*

## Appendix H

**THE UTTERANCE**

Tanya

“When I grow up I’m going to have 2 children and they are going to be so cute . . . it’s too bad you wont meet them”.

“Oh well you’ll be dead . . . Mom its OK, don’t worry, people are born, they live, they die, it’s a happy ending”.

“and yet they exist”. (in response to Mum’s utterance: ‘you know I don’t believe in bottled water’).

---

Abby

“Are Jewish weddings more fun than Christian weddings?”

Do you believe in God

Do you believe in the Loch Ness Monster

How do we get babies if there are just girl cows on the farm?

---

Nora

I’m not brown right Mummy

You should buy it for me and make me happy

---

Rachel

She’ll call me fat. ‘She’ll call me fat, they call each other fat, everybody’s fat in our family’.

it wasn’t something he said . . . one of the worst things that ever happened – ‘your child is a menace, you just keep him off my property

---

Paula

I was crying and my daughter came up to me and she hugged and she said 'you know Mummy don't worry 'everything is going to be alright just like that song'.

I'm not watching this movie (children's animation) they're being mean to that man, they're making fun of him and they're not nice to him.

Mandy

The Sara that went to China.

Child asks to play at friend's house: 'her complete, you know, lack of concern, where I was just torn about it, I have never been torn about them going to anybody else's house'.

Yvonne

I thought you said scooters were dangerous

Now, Mum your feeling sorry for yourself and that's not appropriate, you need to come up and talk to everybody.

Eve

I heard that statistically children hear about sex from their friends at school in grade 4.

(Her son bit his baby sister & drew blood) that was the first time that I was angry with him, the boy I loved so much hurt the girl I loved so much and I had never encountered that . . . .that I would be so torn between being so angry with him, but still loving him.

Jill

(there have been so many over many years) So how come you don't believe in God?

When I grow up I'm going to be a superhero

Is what the heck a bad thing to say?

---

**Reading for the Whole**

Tanya

Mum gives several examples to illustrate the zen-like quality of her daughter, especially when she was younger. Mum talks about how her child's utterances ask that she give up some cherished wants – like the possibility of meeting her grandchildren.

Much joy and admiration in this relationship.

Mum uses this incident as one example of how her child challenges the idea that we can sculpt our children, as her daughter's tastes and choice sometimes are the complete opposite of Mum's. Also, Mum explains that at times her daughter's requests give her pause for thought that her own views are not shared by others and how does she address this at times and compromise in these circumstance

---

Abby

In this interview Mum talks about how the influence of her child(ren) is not actually a challenge to her beliefs rather it forces her to “think about the kinds of answers we give them”. Mum talks about a recent and lovely experience where she and her daughter could watch a Jewish wedding on the beach. This family is non-practicing Christian and Jewish – Mum describes this incident with great warmth and as an almost magical but most certainly special event.

In this incident Mum recounts how daughter wants to know how they get baby calves if they only cows on the farm. Mum knows her daughter has witnessed the artificial insemination process and recognizes she may not have understood exactly what was happening. Dad gives a detailed explanation and discusses sex which mother isn't sure child is ready for and out of character for Mum she gets the giggles.

---

Nora

In response to another child's utterance that this Mum's son is too brown to play with, her son come to her from the playground and asks: 'I'm not brown right Mummy'. Mum talks

about her surprise that skin color is an issue and now how this comment has impacted her son – how he doesn't want to be dark like his daddy.

In this incident Mum sees a behaviour of herself manifest in her son. Mum had joked with child's Dad that he should buy her something to show his love and to make her happy. Mum admits that it is a joke but there are parts of this she bought into herself – she doesn't particularly admire this in herself but when she saw in her son she very much wants to 'nip this in the bud'

---

Rachel

Weight was an issue for Mum after 4 kids, but she works out, eats healthily, and for example asks husband if she will ever get in shape again in between children. She is concerned regarding her role/contribute to the discussions of weight in her daughter(s) and their peers engage in.

Son injured another child and Mum expresses concern for other child and recognizes own child can also be angry and impulsive and may have intentionally hurt this other child but she doesn't really think so. Mum is surprised and hurt by the reaction of the other parent and how he labels her son as a menace.

---

Paula

After the death of her husband and father of their two children Mum chose a particular song for the Dad's service. Mum wanted a service that would provide solace for the people in attendance, their children in particular, and not to shut out her husband's memory but to open a space for him to be remembered in their daily lives. A few weeks after the funeral Mum was crying and her daughter repeated a line from a song that service, a song that Mum had chosen particularly to give comfort to her children and when her daughter repeated this Mum was shocked but noted how her daughter wanted to make her better and say something of comfort.

Mum recounts two specific occasions where her son didn't want to watch show (Disney animation & American Idol) where people were being mocked and Mum notes the lesson of the movie is lost on him because he can't get past the treatment of someone . . . her son's behaviour helped her realize 'as kids we just accepted them the way they were . . . and I

realized there are certain things that I didn't want him to see because they would influence him' and she didn't realize they would.

---

#### Mandy

Child wasn't describing somebody by outward appearance rather by an even that someone had taken place. Mum reflects on her hometown, how little diversity there was, so when you saw person with brown skin it was apparent and defining. Her child is in a multicultural class so 'being Chinese' wasn't individual to her'. Mum talks with great passion and respect for her child and speaks to how she and her husband are committed to 'not letting' unexamined racial and prejudices seep in.

In this instance Mum talks about her discomfort when her child asks to go on a play date. The request is not unusual in and of itself, rather it is Mum's discomfort and Mum expresses difficulty in understanding where this discomfort comes from. Issues of discrimination and identification of individuals by visible characters has been a theme in this interview but in this instance Mum talks about communication difficulties and not having met both parents or visiting the home.

---

#### Yvonne

The middle child in the family asked for a scooter for her birthday and Mum was planning to buy this for her when her son recalled that he had been denied the same present years before. Mum notes how decisions are never that straight forward or black and white especially with children: 'that are very different, almost opposites' and it made her explain that the no scooter rule was in relation to her son's personality. Mum didn't have the same safety issues with her middle child as with her first. Mum notes: -- I probably shouldn't have said no scooters'.

The plans for Mum's birthday fell through and after some discussion on how to address this Mum left the conversation to be by herself when her son came to her and reflects back to her that she is feeling sorry for herself and she needs to come back and talk this through. Mum feels slightly embarrassed that her son is correct in his assessment and that he has called her on this – but that also she is impressed that her son has identified this and some of what they are trying to teach him is getting through.

---

#### Eve

The utterance did not originate with her son but the utterances immediately generated concern for her son and the kinds of information he might be getting. Mum explains she grew up in a home where 'sex' and sexuality were not discussed and this fact increased her concern. Mum expressed 'happiness' to have engaged her son in a discussion about sex in which he could

ask questions without having to directly look at her and that she had broken her family's silence of not talking about subjects and issues that might feel uncomfortable. Her expressed goal was so her son could have accurate information from which to make 'good' decisions.

In this instance Mum is surprised about how angry she was at her young son, whom she loves so much. Her son bit his 5 month old sister and Mum is faced with the dilemma of loving them both but feeling angry at her boy. Mum reflects how in her childhood home she would have been spanked – Mum understood that instinct but did not want to repeat with her children and she did not.

---

Jill

Mum talks about how she has come to understand how religion can provide comfort for people. Her daughter's questions have challenged her to think about why she believes certain things and not others to explain this to her daughter.

At school there was discussion of what children would do when they grew up and the children drew pictures to represent this. Several parents of the children in the class are teachers, so there were pictures of teachers. This Mum's child drew a superhero. Which made mum laugh and explain that they weren't a superhero kind of family.

---

### **Key words**

Tanya

Shock

Horror

Feelings of failure

(laughs)

their own minds

made me rethink

---



Nora

Shock Confusion

Shock

Wake up call

---

Rachel

They call each other fat

---

Abby

'getting caught off guard by questions'

You know

---

Rachel

anger for being taunted

I was angry for him being called that name

Hurt

scared

frustration

---

Paula

Um and just shocked me

I was shocked that she understood . . . but she knew that that song said that in it

come from him

just born to him

big part of that's just wiring

just part of who he is and it will never go away

---

Mandy

Descriptor

Identity

Discriminatory term

Classification

You chose what makes that completely individual and being Chinese wasn't individual like it would have been in Sudbury, to China was individual for her.

I want them to make that decision

Answer questions best I can and try to let them decide

---

Yvonne

Wow

---

Eve

protection

silence

comfort

scared to death

breaking the silence

right choices

silent treatment from mum

scared

afraid

pivotal moment

---

Jill

Interesting

---

### **Repetitions**

Tanya

Made me rethink

could sculpt their minds . . . surprises me, their own minds . . . very shocked.

---

Abby

‘kind of answers we give them, in order to let them decide for themselves’

‘as parents try to give them the best possible answer that we’re influencing them

I just wasn’t prepared

You know

---

Nora

You know

Hurt me

---

Rachel

meanness

critical of each other

control

controlling of herself

They control me

Hard to know,

Wasn't there

Never can say

---

Paula

I guess we want to influence our children and sometimes we influence them without realizing it works

Mocking show

Mocking people

---

Mandy

I've just always remembered that

I don't know why

Felt nervous about it

How I wasn't comfortable

I was just torn about it

I felt very uncomfortable and I don't know why, I felt very nervous about letting her go and I, I, think it comes from a negative place.

You know.

---

Yvonne

things are not always that black and white

a little bit embarrassed

Almost like me caught me doing something wrong

We're teaching him, we're trying to teach him . . so we're trying to teach him when you're upset, then need to, come and say . . .

---

Eve

Afraid

You know

---

Jill

pops these things

interesting

surprise

---

**Revelatory Phrases**

Tanya

“OK, alright, I’ll just let go of that idea, of me seeing my grandchildren but she was just totally find with it and it’s interesting because she doesn’t really remember that anymore, but I do”.

Soon realized that children have their own minds which was shocking to me, I really thought that we could sculpt their minds and mould them into what ever we want and I know that, this is like a long debate and all the stuff that I learnt in education didn’t prepare me for parenthood . . . I always thought parental influence was much bigger than it actually is. It still shocked me because I thought I would have over-riding control and I just didn’t.

I thought Ok, yeah, alright fair enough, good point, so then, I had to explain my own fundamental beliefs in its use, just because I don’t believe in something doesn’t mean everybody else believes in it.

It really surprised me how much I loose that battle over and over again.

---

Nora

I never really realized like that it was an issue (skin color). I never saw it as, you, know something would impact him in this day and time . . . it hurts me sometimes to have him think like that, because I don’t wanna, I don’t want him to think there is something wrong with him.

Like it was a negative that he was brown so we couldn’t figure out where he might have heard that from.

Other parents didn’t seem as shocked by it as me

I don’t think he’s not brown it was the fact that it was brought up as an issue

---

Rachel

I wonder what I did to start this

My god what kind of neighbourhood is this

Made me sensitive about other kids

---

Paula

So you know I chose that, it (the song) for them hoping that that would influence them and it did but turn was reflected back to me again, without realizing that that was going to happen

But as a child . . . he couldn't understand why I would ask him to watch a movie where they were being mean to someone, that's just, what is that about, how can you do that, how can make a movie that's nasty – in his mind.

I felt glad that he could show that to me.

---

Mandy

Made me rethink what I've said.

Guess their opinions are formed by events that happen . . . because the event determined who this was to her.

I felt very nervous about letting her go and I, I think it comes from a negative place.

'Cause I didn't know where she was going and I don't know if it had anything to do with them being Russian or English not being their first language and not being able to communicate well, it was just, I didn't know what she was going into and she's just completely open minded and willing to accept different things, and since having my children I have definitely become more open minded and tried to accept new things and try new things for their sake and I'm greatly influenced by them and their openness.

---

Abby

She's bringing it up for the first time, I just wasn't prepared and if she had asked me and he hadn't been there, I probably wouldn't have used the word sex unless she asked more questions . . . so it just threw me for a loop and I think it made me think, you know what we

really should have this discussion with her and he explained in great detail all like very scientific deep stuff and I was just somewhat worried that she would keep asking questions and I didn't know if that was the right time and zone to be having that discussion but at the same time as soon as ask a question you should answer it so yeah thinking about it that's probably the latest one, where you know what's a big ticket item as a parent to have that discussion and I wasn't (laughs) up for the challenge at that point but I think I should have

---

Yvonne

Like I was wanting him to be assertive and that yeah they do it with you and you're kind of wow, crap. I guess it worked

---

Eve

My instinct was to I wanted to slap his bum, because that's the home I grew up in but I didn't want to do it . . . so it scared me that I could be so angry with my child and I was afraid that I would resort to smacking or you know, and I didn't want to and so, I think that was a pivotal role, ah, pivotal moment in how I learned to deal with my anger towards my kids.

I realized that I was, I changed the way, I grew up with the silence about sex, and made it more overt if anything if any problems arise in the future that they feel they can come home and talk about it, to help them make the right choices.

Like he influenced me to keep the lines of communication open.

Kids in all areas and not just the areas I feel comfortable with.

---

Jill

So, I think from that I kind of learned there is only so far you can go . . . so sometimes they just wanna be right and it doesn't hurt me, so they can be right



... start thinking so where does that, where does my belief come, my lack of belief come from, what do I base that on, why is that reassuring to me, not to believe, whereas its, it would be more reassuring to her to actually believe

---

**Idiomatic Expressions**

Tanya

She (daughter) was very zen-like when she was quite young

---

Abby

You know

---

Nora

You know

---

Paula

Came from her as well

You know

I mean

You know

---

Mandy

You know

---

Eve

You know

When it bothers me so much I just can't wait for a best time

Broken the cycle form my mother

---

Jill

It's interesting

You know

---

**Other Thoughts:**

Tanya

Aware of when she became a person – “I remember when I knew that I was a me”.

---

Nora

I thought it was just more so in my head but to see that he's actually started to think that way too, that sort of, me me realize . . . because I don't want him to think that if I don't buy him something that I don't love him

---

Paula

She wanted to say something to me that, you know, I would probably say to her

You almost put your own grief on hold.

The most significant because it's the most emotional area . . . how they've influenced how we deal with the death of their father, my husband.

I felt a little bit ashamed that I didn't realize what I was asking him to watch, I also felt, I felt glad that he was able to show that to me . . . I was a little bit ashamed that I would have taken part in that type of behaviour without realizing it, if he hadn't been beside me.

---

Mandy

Talks about difference between 2 girls how one never asks questions and the other asks lots of questions. One thinks about it more and the other comes out and asks the question, e.g., how babies are made.

Control

Safety

---

Yvonne

I always thought I don't know how much is getting through to him, so for him to come up with that, it was sort of reassuring that oh, oh, ok so yeah, he is absorbing some of these

---

Eve

When people get tongue-tied and embarrassed, you know, then the kids feel like maybe I shouldn't talk about this, but there are too many dangers associated with sex now that I need to protect my kids and the only way I can protect my kids is by opening up.

---

Jill

But when you start getting questioned about it, especially from somebody who is stressed about going to hell.

Not a superhero kind of family

She also lives in her own little make believe world, so maybe god's there, I don't know, there's all kinds of princesses, witches, and fairies there, and so maybe god could be too.

What the heck – usually she's not that bothered about right or wrong answers, friends in opposition but she wanted me to say it was rude . . . once she had gotten the answer she wanted she was satisfied.

---

Appendix I

### Terms

*Active responsivity.* The speaker assumes that the addressee is not a passive recipient.

*Addressee.* The person or people whom the utterance is designed for, directed to, and who takes an active responsive position toward the utterance. For example, the addressee prepares to enact the request of the utterance.

*Addressivity.* The process of forming an utterance to speak include the idea that the utterance is formed with respect to a very real other with an understanding and expectancy of what the particular other's responsive may be.

*Bidirectionality.* In the process of socialization both parent and child influence each other. Some models of bidirectionality are based on contingent reactive factors whereas other models look to how parent and child influence each other and actively transform knowledge, values, and/or social or cultural practices.

*Contexts.* Socialization takes place within particular contexts or daily routines. For example when a family attends a religious service the child is being socialized into a particular religion and the customs and routines of that religion. Children and parent(s) also have daily contexts of the routines of going to bed getting ready for school, or eating a meal together.

*Domains.* In regard to parent-socialization literature, domains tend to refer to socio-cognitive domains, that is superordinate categories for classifying areas of socialization, e.g.: personal issues or social-conventional issues.

*Meaning.* According to Bakhtin, meaning is not 'held' in the word or sentence, rather meaning is a process of understanding between the speaker and the addressee – an inherently responsive process.

*Multiple sources of influence.* That parents and children influence each other took a primary position in early socialization research more recently, however, the idea that many other sources (e.g., peers, siblings, teachers, media) also influence children is widely accepted.

*Speaker.* The speaker is the person who expresses utterances.

*Speech Genre.* Speech genres are spheres of language in which particular kinds of utterances tend to be used.

*Utterance.* In the unit of speech communication which can be composed of sentences and words, for example, but expresses a complete thought. Utterances differ from sentences in that they: carry the voices of others, elicit responses, and are unrepeatable events in time and space.